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Honor and Eta

What's Eating the Eta?

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"Honor and Eta" is a D&D Oriental Adventures *scenario set in the world of Rokugan that is designed to challenge four 1st-level player characters. The adventure can be adjusted for characters up to 8th level by increasing the strength and number of the villains as described in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. Characters with a high regard for honor would be most suited for this adventure. A shaman or a shugenja would prove to be helpful. Characters who complete the adventure should gain enough experience to reach the midpoint to the next level.*

Note: Honor is important in Rokugan-some might say more important than life itself. The honor "level"of every NPC is noted in their respective stat blocks after alignment. See page 68 of Oriental Adventures *for more information on honor.*

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Cakon is a wealthy city founded on trade. Like all the cities of Rokugan, Cakon has a strict caste system. The "kuge," or noble samurai families, form the uppermost caste. The kuge are often related directly to the Imperial Family, hold titles, or own large amounts of land. The next caste is the 'buke," or samurai. The buke are landowners and part of the military elite. The next caste is the "bonge," or commoners. The bonge include both the "heimin," who are often merchants, craftsmen, and farmers, as well as the "hinin," who include criminals, entertainers, geisha, and "eta." The eta dwell outside Cakon in a squalid hamlet. They do the jobs that are thought to interfere with inner harmony and cause spiritual pollution, including butchering, the removal of human and animal waste, and executions.

Tomie Cho dwells in a mud but a few miles outside the city of Cakon. She is the last of her family, a people cursed generations ago for drinking from a sacred well. Tomie Cho, like all of her family, is a lycanthrope - a weretiger. She lives by hunting in her tiger form and tending a small wild garden of sweet potatoes and yellow beans. Time has not been kind to Tomie Cho; she has become old and weak. Hunting rabbits has become difficult, gardening tiresome. Tomie Cho has found easier prey: the eta.

The untouchables live in constant fear of the "spirit creature" who hunts them for food. They are convinced that the impurity of their souls has led the wicked creature to them. By refusing to perform the duties associated with spiritual pollution, the eta hope to attain salvation from the monster.

Mibu Kagemaro, a lesser Kuge of Cakon and member of the Crane clan, has recently been promoted to an office in the financial ministry. To celebrate the promotion, Kagemaro and his older brother Mibu Ieko spent an evening at the "House of Tranquility" geisha house. While enjoying the company of a lovely and talented poetess, the brothers were attacked by a drunken and jealous mercenary. Before the local police could intervene, the mercenary slew Ieko and wounded Kagemaro.

The mercenary was sentenced to death, but the judge, a rival of the Mibu family, placed a clause on the execution: If, for any reason, the sentence could not be carried out in three days, the mercenary was to be released.

When the local authorities went to the eta village to hire an executioner, they discovered that no one would accept the job. They tried both money and threats, but nothing could entice the eta to return to work.

When Mibu Kagemaro discovered the plight of the eta, he decided to take action. Kagemaro traveled to a "common" part of Cakon to hire a group of adventurers to save the eta and restore the typical social order to Cakon.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This adventure revolves around two common themes in many Asian cultures, societies, and mythology: honor and caste. Honor involves following what society deems as proper, respectable behavior. Caste involves the social and economic class in which each person is born. Few can break out of these socially enforced prisons.

During the course of the adventure, the characters will delve into the lowest level of the caste system. The caste of the eta, or hinin, are those who are polluted with sin (by the standards of religious purity). These people do the jobs that are associated with filth, blood, and death.

To complete the adventure, the characters must discover what is plaguing the local eta village. They need to follow several clues that lead to an elderly woman cursed with lycanthropy who has been devouring the untouchables. Only once the lycanthrope is destroyed will the eta be safe and return to their unsavory work.

The adventure begins in a wealthy trade city. The city can easily be set in any *Oriental Adventures* campaign including a setting of your own devising. Once in the city, the PCs meet a troubled yet honorable aristocrat who needs to complete a job that his caste will not permit him to attempt.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Although this adventure is designed for beginning characters, the module can be run for characters up to 8th level by changing the strength and number of the opponents.

2nd- to 3rd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written but with the following changes:

- Add one more crow tengu to encounter 4.
- Give Tomie Cho a level of wu jen.

4th- to 5th-level PCs: Run the adventure with the changes above, as well as with the following modifications:

- Giving the tengu in encounter 4 maximum hit points.
- Increase the number of bakemono in encounter 6 to four per PC.
- Adjust Tomie Cho to reflect the basic weretiger template in the *Monster Manual* (no age penalties). Also, have Tomie Cho soak the outside of her but with water to prevent it from easily burning.

6th- to 7th-level PCs: In addition to the changes above, add the following modifications:

- Increase the number of tengu in encounter 4 to one per PC, each with two levels as a samurai.
- Make the bakemono in encounter 6 hobgoblins and double the number.
- Give Tomie Cho three levels of wu jen.

8th-level PCs: In addition to the changes above, add the following modifications:

- Increase the number of tengu in encounter 4 to three per PC, each with three samurai levels.
- Change the bakemono in encounter 6 to ogres.
- Give Tomie Cho five levels of wu jen, and two ghast allies.

CHARACTER HOOKS

The characters can be in the city of Cakon for many reasons. Some might be native to the region, while others might dwell in outlying areas. Since the city is founded on trade, the characters might have journeyed to the location for supplies. Nearby shrines might have attracted religious PCs. The characters could have just completed a mission for a patron, instructor, or daimyo and are now enjoying some free time.

The motive for the characters to help young Mibu Kagemaro can be driven by the quest to achieve wealth (the reward Mibu Kagemaro offers), the aspect of duty (social duty or "gimu"), mercy for the eta (compassion for others or "ninjo"), or just personal honor.

Western characters traveling through the exotic Orient might also be interested in this mission. Since they are outside the social structure, the lure of wealth and excitement might prove motive enough.

Encounter 1: A Polite Request.

Despite the fact that it is early morning, the temperature and humidity have already reached uncomfortable levels. The market district is full of activity. Swarms of gnats, common summer pests, hang like clouds over the damp earthen roads. A trio of bamboo flute playing musicians has captured your attention. Perhaps it is the common entertainment that attracts you, or maybe it's the silk tarp that promises shade and a slight breeze.

While watching the performance, the PCs notice a brightly painted palanquin carried by two sweat-soaked youths. The palanquin is brought to the edge of the performance and lowered. The screens are opened and a slight, young, thin-lipped, man is visible inside. The man wears a beautiful pastel orange silk kimono. His hair is cut and oiled in the latest court fashion. A noticeable bruise darkens the young man's left eye.

When the musicians have finished, the young man passionately applauds and tosses a handful of rectangular silver coins toward the players. He then raises his voice and states that he is looking for a few bold and honorable citizens.

As the musicians depart, a small group gathers about the palanquin, eager to see more examples of this noble's wealth.

Creature (EL 1): With the slightest bow of his head, the young noble introduces himself as Mibu Kagemaro, a member of the financial ministry and member of the Crane Clan. He politely waits for all of those gathered to introduce themselves before he begins:

"Two nights ago, my brother Mibu Ieko and myself enjoyed the company of the geisha O-Sode at the House of Tranquility. O-Sode is a most talented poet and the favorite of many customers. While enjoying the divine company of O-Sode, we were interrupted by the drunken mercenary Daigoro. Daigoro was angry that he was unable to enjoy the services of O-Sode after returning from a hard campaign in the north. My brother called out for assistance and Daigoro slew him with a hidden dagger. I, too, was attacked before the doshin (local police force) could contain Daigoro.

"Daigoro was taken before Judge Sono Kentanaga and sentenced to death. The Sono have long been rivals with the Mibu, and the Judge placed a clause on Daigoro's sentence. If Daigoro's sentence is not carried out in three days, the punishment is deemed unfortunate and unlucky, and Daigoro is to go free.

"The doshin went to the eta village to hire an executioner as soon as the sentence was posted. However, none of the untouchables would accept the task. Promises of gold coins and threats of death could not convince the eta to complete the task. The eta said that a man-eating spirit has been ritually devouring them as punishment for their unclean souls. They refuse to do any of the duties they normally perform until the creature is destroyed.

"If a suitable executioner is not available by sunset today Daigoro will go free. The death of my brother and the attack on my person crave justice. My loss of honor would be unbearable. I come to you at great risk of embarrassment to myself and my family name. I ask you to help me make certain that Daigoro receives the punishment he deserves.

"A cash string of 30 gold coins awaits any and all who accept this challenge. Upon successful completion of the task, I ask you to meet me here at dusk. I cannot advise you how to proceed in this endeavor. I only ask that you use good judgment and act independently so as not to further add to my embarrassment. You have my thanks and those of my ancestors"

With that, Mibu Kagemaro bows his head to the assembled group and closes the palanquin screens. His bearers take him away from the market district as the crowd slowly dissipates. Only a few stolid-looking individuals remain.

Mibu Kagemaro avoids contact with the PCs until their mission is complete. Should the PCs attempt to contact him, he sends a servant who bears a note that politely requests the PCs act on their own. He offers no further direction or advice.

PCs might want to use the Sense Motive skill to determine Mibu Kagemaro's intentions. A successful check (DC 20) reveals that Mibu Kagemaro has been honest, trustworthy, but embarrassed by the entire incident.

Mibu Kagemaro, Human Male Ari2: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 2d8; hp 13 (currently 8); Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL LN (Honorable Thought); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Craft (calligraphy) +4, Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Listen +5, Perform (ballad, drama, ode) +4, Profession (scribe) +5, Ride +4, Sense Motive +5; *Feats:* Endurance, Skill Focus (Profession-scribe).

Possessions: Silk kimono, dagger, calligraphy brush set with ink and parchment, coin purse with 100 gp and 30 sp.

Tactics: Mibu Kagemaro will avoid a fight if possible. Although he has had the basic training in the arts of bushido, he relies upon his sharp mind and status as weapons.

Development: The players might be tempted to have their characters perform the execution. If this course of action is suggested, the DM should explain that by undertaking the job of executioner, the character would attain the same social stigma associated with the eta. Such a character would risk loss of all honor and spiritual pollution - indeed, such a character would not even be allowed to approach members of the kuge, such as Mibu Kagemaro. Any other member of the kuge or buke castes (possibly including adventuring companions) would shun the character from the execution onward, and even non-eta bonge would go out of their way to avoid the character once news spread of the PC's deed.

If the characters suggest this to Kagemaro, he looks at them in disgust, then pretends he didn't hear them correctly. If the PCs press the issue, he either leaves the area, or, if in his own "territory," call for guards to escort the "would-be eta" from his presence.

Creatures (EL 2 or 4): The characters might also seek to hire an NPC executioner. All NPCs they approach turn away with disgust. A samurai member of the Lion clan traveling discretely to a rendezvous is in town, and there is a chance the PCs might try to hire him, as he carries a concealed katana (Spot, DC 15 to notice it). They also attract the attention of a member of Diagoro's mercenary band, the ronin Tetsuo, with any inquiries. He then approaches the PCs, feigning interest in their offer to find out exactly what they're attempting.

Ogura Tokinari, Human Male Sam2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 2d10; hp 16; Init +5 (+4 Improved Init, +1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +4 melee (1d10+1/crit 19-20, katana); AL N (Honorable Action); SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Craft (calligraphy) +1, Disguise +1, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +1, Listen +2, Perform +1, Ride +2, Spot +1. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Weapon Focus (katana).

Possessions: Poor quality kimono, rain cape, masterwork katana (concealed), masterwork wakizashi (concealed), straw hat, coin purse with 20 gold pieces.

Tactics: Ogura Tokanari will be insulted to the point of violence if asked to perform an execution. He will also be embarrassed that his disguise has been exposed. He will challenge the offending character to a duel unless the party successfully makes a Diplomacy check (DC 15). Should combat break out, Tokanari will fight to first blood before he feels his honor is satisfied.

Tetsuo, Human Male Ftr2/Rog2: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 2d10 plus 2d6; hp 25; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (leather armor, +2 Dex); Atk +8 melee (1d6+3/crit 19-20, wakizashi); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL NE (Honorless); SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Appraise +4, Balance +4, Bluff +4, Climb +6, Disable Device +4, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +4, Forgery +2, Listen +2, Ride +2, Swim +4. *Feats:* Endurance, Weapon Focus (wakizashi), Power Attack, Cleave.

Possessions: Cotton kimono, dirty leather armor, thieves' tools, masterwork wakizashi, coin purse with 12 sp.

Tactics: If Tetsuo is asked about rendering services as an executioner, he will question the party to discover the victim. He then laughs at the PCs and plots an ambush. First Tetsuo will use his Hide skill in a narrow residential alleyway and await the PCs' approach. Tetsuo then attempts to sneak attack the strongest looking PC in the tight alley before wading into combat with the rest of the group. Tetsuo will fight until he has taken half damage and then try to flee.

Encounter 2: The City Gate

The eta dwell outside the walls of the city. Eventually the PCs have to leave the city to speak with them. When they leave Cakon, read or paraphrase the following:

The gates of the city are open, inviting in a modest breeze and a constant flow of oxen and farmers. Two guards clad in heavy o-yori armor, jingasa helmets, and clutching spears check the farmer's packs for contraband. The warriors look quite bored and seem to care little about the job they perform. An old beggar sits in the shade of the gate and extends a cracked clay bowl toward all who pass. His skin is tanned dark by the sun and his head is plucked bald. He wears a simple rag loincloth.

Creature (EL 1/3): As the PCs approach the gate, a small brown and white dog slinks out of an alley and begins to sniff the old beggar. As the dog becomes more inquisitive, the beggar becomes visibly distressed and begins to cry out. The dog, sensing the old man's fear, begins to growl and snap. The guards and a few farmers stop to watch the alarmed old man. Laughter breaks out when the beggar starts to whimper as the dog tugs on his tattered clothing.

Stray Dog (Inu): CR 1/3; Small Animal; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d4+1/ crit 20 bite); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5, Wilderness Lore +1/ +8.

Tactics: The dog is just curious and only attacks if cornered.

Creature (EL 5): The old beggar is able to defend himself but is currently on a spiritual journey that mandates he cannot raise a hand to do so if attacked.

Old Beggar, Human Male Mnk5: CR 5; Medium size Humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 5d8; hp 38; Init 0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15; Atk +3 melee (1d8, unarmed attack); SA stunning attack; SQ evasion, still mind, slow fall (20 ft.), purity of body; AL LG (outside the realm of honor); SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +6, Escape Artist +8, Hide +12, Listen +6, Move Silently +10, Tumble +7. *Feats:* Deflect Arrows, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Hide).

Possessions: Rag loincloth, begging bowl.

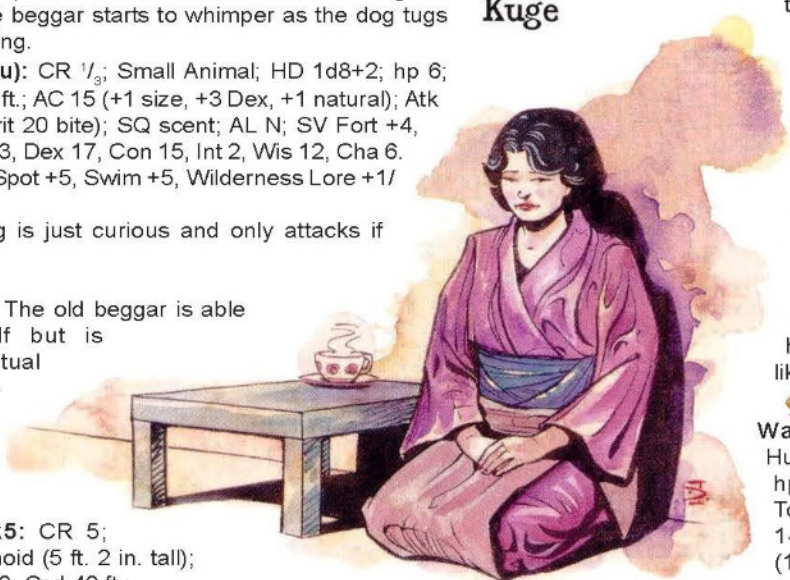
Tactics: The old beggar is an enigma. He uses his Hide skill if followed by the PCs and avoids combat at all cost.

Development: If the PCs even movetoward the dog, it flees. The guards go back to their duties, and the flow of traffic in and out of the city continues. The old beggar, safe and happy, then approaches the PCs and bows.

"Generous citizens, you have my humble thanks for saving my unworthy self. I would like to return the favor by telling you a riddle: 'Under the right arm of the strong is the gift. The strong bends to the sky with two benches of stone at his feet. The gift will guide your fortune'." After reciting his riddle, the beggar sits down and returns to his bowl. He will answer no questions nor speak again to the PCs. The gate guards explain that he offers this riddle to everyone and is most likely crazy.

If the PC do nothing about the stray dog, it runs off after a few nasty tugs on the old mans rags. The old beggar scrambles to his feet and wanders away muttering to himself.

Kuge



Creatures (EL 1): The gate Kuge guards are lazy, but they do understand that guarding the gate is their duty. If asked for directions to the eta village, they will look slightly incredulous as to why the PCs would want to go there, but they provide the instructions. The guards then make quiet, but audible, jokes about the characters "visiting that sty of humanity" and "wanting to be more like the pigs" as the PCs walk away.

Gate Guards, Human Male War1 (2): CR ½; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 1d8; hp 11 each (includes +3 hp for Toughness); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (+4 brigandine); Atk +1 melee (1d8/crit x3, shortspear);

AL LN (Honorable Action); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb -3, Intimidate +2, Listen +3, Spot +3. *Feats:* Alertness, Toughness.

Possessions: Brigandine armor, cotton kimono, shortspear, bamboo pipe and tobacco, coin purse with 9 gold pieces.

Tactics: If trouble erupts, the guards cry out and try to hold the post. Although lazy, they understand that deserting the gate will cost them their lives.

Encounter 3: The Village of the Untouchables

The eta village lies only a quarter mile outside the city and is visible from the city gate. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters enter the village:

The village of the eta is little more than a collection of wicker and thatch huts on a barren plain. Garbage and filth cover the muddy ground. The smell is pungent in the warm air and catches in your throat. The people who dwell in this squalor do the jobs associated with spiritual pollution: the removal of garbage, sweeping of streets, butchering, fish cleaning, leather work, burying the dead, and performing executions. The eta are despised by nearly all the people of Rokugan, even their fellow non-eta bonge. A samurai can practice "kirisute-gomen" and cut down an eta on the spot for any imagined insult without fear of the law.

Currently about 120 eta sit idle. They have built a tiny shrine in the center of the village and adorned it with carved cork sculptures, bone jewelry, and a handful of copper coins with square holes in the center (zeni). From time to time, a member of the village kneels before the shrine in silent supplication. The soft sounds of weeping seem to echo throughout the compound.

PCs are welcome to make a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) to discover the tradition associated with the shrine. The shrine appears to be dedicated to all of the local religions. The eta hope to blanket the divine forces to find salvation.

The eta are shy and frightened of visitors. They avoid eye contact and keep physically distant from the PCs. They answer any questions the PCs ask as best they can.

The eta believe that some spirit creature has developed a taste for human flesh. The attacks started over a month ago. The creature attacks at night, once or twice a week. The last attack was two days ago. The spirit creature prefers children or the elderly as prey, but all who see the beast die by its claws. The trail the beast leaves as it drags off its victims is a bloody mess and easy to follow, although no one has been brave enough to attempt it. Only one man in the village has seen the creature and lived. Hiro the undertaker encountered the creature four nights ago while returning from fishing.

If Hiro is requested to come forward, he does so. The man is a huge, filthy, hairy brute with wild, haunted eyes, a flat face, and a toothless mouth. Wounds, only a few days old, decorate this man's torso and neck. Across his back is a rusted and chipped no-dachi (greatsword). Hiro is timid despite his intimidating appearance. He bows to the ground before the PCs and begins his tale. Hiro states that four nights ago he was returning home from fishing in one of the channels that water the local rice paddies about two miles from the eta village. His 8-year-old

nephew "Oke" was with him. It was dusk and they were rushing home with a small string of fish. Suddenly, out of the underbrush leapt a huge jungle cat. The creature grabbed Oke and shook him like a rag doll. Hiro plunged his spear into the creature but the weapon had no effect. The creature then turned on Hiro and slashed him about the chest and neck with its talons. Before Hiro could attack again, the creature fled, dragging Oke with it. Hiro returned to the village, ashamed and terribly frightened.

Hiro, Human Male Ftr2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 2d10+4; hp 21 (currently 17); Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +7 melee (2d6+4/crit 19-20, greatsword); AL N (Untrustworthy); SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +6, Jump, +6, Profession (undertaker) +2, Swim +6, Wilderness Lore +2. *Feats:* Power Attack, Run, Track, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Possessions: Rag clothing, straw hat, no-dachi, shortspear.

Tactics: Hiro avoids any conflict with the PCs. He knows his place in society and is careful not to offend those of higher castes. Hiro also knows he shouldn't carry a weapon, but he uses the no-dachi to butcher animals and the spear to hunt.

Development: The eta promise to return to work if the attacks stop. Hiro even volunteers to perform the execution if the party mentions their overall purpose. The eta will show the PCs a game trail the spirit creature has used to drag off its latest victims. The trail leads toward the rice paddies, and dried blood can be seen on the grass. PCs with the Track feat can make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) to identify the signs that a large predatory feline has passed through the area recently.

The Trail of the Man Eater

The trail the monster leaves is easy to follow. Characters with the Track feat notice that no attempt was made to conceal the creature's passage and that it uses the same trail frequently. Like most game trails, the path makes irregular twists and turns but often crosses and combines with the footpaths of local farmers. Droplets of dried blood and torn bits of clothing can be found the entire length of the trail. A successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) allows someone with the Track feat to follow these signs without trouble for a while. Without the Track feat, a Search check (DC 10) reveals the signs as well. The surface of the trail between the scene of Oke's abduction and the beast's lair doesn't change much, so no further Wilderness Lore or Search checks need be made after this.

Encounter 4: The Bridge

At one point the monster's trail joins with a farmer's footpath and crosses a rather wide irrigation canal. A large tree trunk has fallen across the canal and acts as a bridge. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters near the bridge:

> The trail of the man-eating monster has taken you across the rice paddies that surround the city. Biting black flies and mosquitoes hover over the paddies and remain a constant irritant. The heat has driven the farmers to seek shelter until evening. The trail of the creature overlaps the farmer's foot-paths and turns toward a large irrigation canal. The canal is 15 feet deep with steep muddy sides. The water is brown with silt and moves slowly toward the paddies. An ancient

maple has been placed across the canal to act as a bridge. The trunk has been worn smooth and flat from many years of use. A few spots of dried blood on the tree trunk bridge indicate that the monster has used this route to drag off its prey.

Swimming the canal is easy (DC 5); the water is 10 feet deep and moves slowly. Climbing the canal embankments is the difficult task, as the sides are steep and muddy. A Climb check (DC 20) is required to scale the banks.

Creatures (EL 2): As soon as the characters ready themselves to cross the bridge, a pair of crow-headed tengu land in the middle of the bridge and draw weapons, seeking to challenge the PCs. The tengu are small, feathered humanoids with crow-like features and black wings clad in rich red, silk kimonos. Each carries a katana. The tengu are only interested in a diversion. They don't mind injuring or even killing a few humans but are more interested in making the PCs look foolish The tengu squawk loudly, mimic the PCs, and wave their weapons at the characters, daring them to cross.

Fighting on the bridge is difficult. A PC struck by a tengu must make Dexterity or Balance check (DC 10). Failure indicates that the character has lost her footing and plunged into the water. The tengu do not suffer such restrictions because they can fly.

Crow-headed Tengu (2): CR 1; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid (4 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 2d8; hp 14, 10; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 Natural); Atk +5 melee (1d10+1/ crit 19-20, katana), -2 melee (1d4+1, beak); SA wing baffle, spell-like abilities, weapon finesse; SQ sound imitation; AL CN (Untrustworthy); SV Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Diplomacy +6, laijutsu Focus +6, Intimidate +6, Perform +4, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7. *Feats:* Dodge, Mobility. *Possessions:* Katana, wakizashi, silk kimonos, coin purse with 2d12 gold pieces each.

SA-Wing Baffle (Ex): A tengu uses its wings in melee, not (usually) to fly, but to buffet and disorient its opponents. Each round, in addition to its normal attacks, a tengu can make a Bluff check (opposed by its opponent's Sense Motive check). If this check is successful, the tengu's attack that round gains a +2 circumstance bonus.

SA-Spell-like Abilities: At will: *change self, ghost sound, minor image, shout*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a sorcerer with as many levels as the tengu has Hit Dice (save DC 11 + spell level).

SA-Weapon Finesse (Ex). Tengu have the benefit of the Weapon Finesse feat with the katana, even though this feat can normally not be applied to the katana.

SQ-Sound Imitation (Ex): Tengu can mimic any voice or sound they have heard. Listeners must succeed at a Will save (DC 12) to detect the ruse.

Tactics: The tengu begin by using their *shout* spell-like ability and then wading into battle with weapon, beak, and wing baffles. They fight until each takes half damage; they then retreat, deeming the PCs worthy opponents.

Encounter 5: The Lonely Hill

The bridge leads across the canal to a small, lush meadow. The monster's trail continues straight through the meadow near a single, tall tree and two red stones that stand near its center, as evidenced by the occasional bit of torn clothing, flesh, or droplet of blood. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters cross the bridge and enter the meadow:

After crossing the ancient maple tree bridge, you notice that the creature's trail crosses a grassy meadow. In the center of the meadow is a single, majestic cedar tree, with two large red granite stones under its spreading limbs. The scene is one of great beauty, impossible for even the most talented landscape artist to capture, and obviously all natural in origin. The monster's trail, enhanced with a few threads of cloth, passes near, then turns away from this peaceful scene toward a small copse of dwarf pines.

This is the answer to the Old Beggar's riddle. Buried in the earth at the base of the tree is a small cache of treasure. Characters can make a Search check (DC 8) to notice that the ground has been disrupted. Random digging turns up the treasure in a few minutes.

Treasure: The items are wrapped in an oil-soaked cotton sheet. The treasure includes two masterwork silver shortspears (yari) with darkwood shafts, a masterwork silver siangham, a ceramic flask containing a potion of cure moderate wounds, and a rice paper scroll with the following divine spells inscribed upon it: cure *light wounds, doom, magic weapon.*

Encounter 6: Bandits

As you near some dwarf pines on the trail, you hear voices coming from the small clump of trees, where small misshapen figures can be seen crouching in the shade. Each of these small humanoids looks slightly different from his neighbor. Some are bright blue in coloration, others have tiny horns, and a few have large tusks. The language they mutter is crude and guttural, and each of them carries a shortspear. The creatures appear to be plotting some sort of mischief. Against a nearby tree are four Medium-size wicker baskets. The trail you're currently following does not enter the dwarf pines but skirts its edge and continues along.

The creature's trail moves near a small clump of dwarf pines. Lounging about and waiting to get enough initiative to proceed with their next attack against pilgrims who travel to a local shrine is a small troop of bakemono (oriental goblins).

Creatures (EL 3): The characters might be able to surprise the raiders if they act quickly and with stealth. The PCs can each have a free partial action if they successfully surprise the bakemono. If the characters remain quiet, they could even avoid the bakemono altogether and sneak past the pines. Read of paraphrase the following as the party nears the dwarf pines:

Bakemono (6): CR ½; Small Humanoid (4 ft. tall); HD 1d8+1 hp 5 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, +6 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, bite), -2 melee (1d6+1, 2 claws); or +0 ranged (1d6+2, shortspear); AL CE (Honorless); SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 7, Taint 3.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +2. *Feats:* Alertness.

Possessions: Bamboo shortspear, coin purse with 2d4 copper pieces each.

Tactics: Since the bakemono outnumber the PCs, they sense an easy victory. They fight to the death. These bakemono are more clever than most and attack first by hurling the spears before closing to melee to claw and bite their foes.

Charm of Perfection

This ornate strip of paper gives its holder a +2 competence bonus to a skill described on the charm. The paper is inked carefully with the Craft (calligraphy) skill, usually with a short poem or fable that deals with the skill in question. The charm must be carried to provide any benefit.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Craft (calligraphy) 5 ranks, skill to be scribed 5 ranks; *Market Price:* 160 gp; *Weight:* -.

Treasure: The wicker baskets contain the loot the bakemono have stolen over the past month.

Basket #1: A block and tackle, a tiny silver gong (worth 10 gp), four paper lanterns, a piece of uncut jade (worth 100 gp). **Basket #2:** A tiny wooden box holding eight fish hooks, a block of incense, three sunrods, a wool blanket.

Basket #3: A bronze bell, a folding paper fan, 23 sp, a full helmet with a grotesque ogre mask attachment (kawari kabuto worth 200 gp), a wooden spoon, a ceramic urn.

Basket #4: A biwa (oriental lute), a set of wooden prayer beads, a bamboo umbrella, two large radishes

Encounter 7: Crouching Tiger

Eventually the party will find the source of the blood trail: A small mud but in a tiny hallow. Tomie Cho, the weretiger who dwells within, is ready for the PCs. She knew her hunting could not go unnoticed forever and has planned her attack carefully. Read or paraphrase the following as the characters enter the weretiger's domain:

> The trail of the man-eater abruptly ends in a small gravel filled hallow. In the center of the hallow is a small dome shaped but made of clay smeared on a frame of bamboo. The outside of the but has warnings and symbols of doom painted upon it with natural dyes. Before the hut lies a smoldering fire pit. Bones and other charred human remains can be seen amid the ash in the fire pit.
>
> An old woman emerges from the doorway of the mud hut. Her long white hair hangs down below her stooped knees. The old woman's skin is tanned and wrinkled, her eyes cloudy and white. She wears a faded cotton kimono. When she opens her mouth to speak, you can see that she has few teeth remaining. "Away with you!" The old woman cries. "Be gone, you fat, rice-eating fools!" With that, she turns, pushes open the hide door flap, and enters the hut.

Note to the DM: Tomie Cho is a vicious opponent for low-level characters, even though she is a weaker lycanthrope. Adjust her strength accordingly if the PCs seem overmatched.

Tomie Cho, Female Weretiger Com1: CR 5; Medium-size/Large Shapechanger (5 ft. tall human/4 ft. tall, 7 ft. long tiger); HD 6d8+6; hp 40; AL NE (Untrustworthy); three alternate forms.

Human Form: Init -2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk -2 melee (1d3-2 subdual, unarmed); SQ alternate form, tiger empathy; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 7, Dex 7, Con 7, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (basketweaving) +4, Handle Animal +4, Listen +4, Profession (farmer) +6 Search +4, Spot +4. *Feats:* Endurance, Improved Control Shape, Skill Focus (Profession - farmer).

Hybrid Form: Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 15; Atk +8 melee (1d8+4, 2 claws), +6 melee (2d6+2, bite); SA pounce, improved grab, rake 1d8+2, curse of lycanthropy; SQ tiger empathy, scent, damage reduction 15/silver; Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Balance +6, Hide +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Search +8, Spot +10, Swim +11. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Improved Control Shape, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Tiger Form: As hybrid form except: Large; AC 14 (-1 size, +5 natural armor); Atk +7 melee 6d8+4, 2 claws), +5 melee (2d6+2, bite); Hide +5.

Tactics: Tomie Cho re-enters her hut and changes into her tiger form. She then waits inside, ready to pounce on the first character to enter. Because the but is small (20-foot radius), only three creatures other than the weretiger can inhabit it at any time. The weretiger will not leave the hut unless it is on fire (it takes 2d6 rounds to fire the hut to the point that Tomie will flee). Tomie Cho knows that by limiting herself to the mud hut she can avoid ranged attacks and many spells.

Treasure: Inside the mud hut are the few possessions Tomie Cho owns. The hut is filthy, and a Search check (DC 15) is required to find them. The treasure includes an ivory belt toggle (netsuke) in the shape of goldfish (worth 3 gp), 8 pieces of copper, a silver pearl (worth 100 gp), and a very ornate strip of paper scribed with a short fable on the handling of wild and domestic animals. (See the sidebar for details on the *charm of perfection*, this particular charm applies its bonus to the Handle Animal skill).

Concluding the Adventure

Once the weretiger has been slain, it is easy to convince the eta that they are now safe from further attacks. Among the untouchables, the PCs become instant heroes and celebrities. The eta quickly return to work in and around the city. Hiro rushes off to perform the execution, and Diagoro meets his just reward.

As promised, at dusk the PCs can meet with Mibu Kagemaro in the market district. The young noble is quite pleased with the characters' performance and eagerly pays them. Mibu Kagemaro also comments upon the characters honor and compassion. He mentions that he feels indebted ("giri" a debt of honor) to the characters and hopes to be able to work with them again in the future.

Continuing the Adventure

The PCs might have made new friends and enemies over the course of the adventure that could reappear later. Mibu Kagemaro might seek to have the PCs join his household and embark on other adventures. The eta might view the characters as saviors and request additional favors from them. Diagoro's mercenaries might seek revenge against the characters for his death. Hiro, who was attacked and wounded by the weretiger, could develop lycanthropy and start another series of murders, perhaps this time against the upper castes.

Dave Zenz is a freelance artist who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota with his lovely wife and feisty dog. Martial arts training gave Dave his first exposure to Asian culture. He would like to dedicate this adventure to his dear friend and favorite playtester, Mike Edwards.

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Rivers of Blood

Treachery and Vengeance

by Paul Leach

artwork by Kennon James • cartography by Christopher West

"Rivers of Blood" is a D&D adventure set in Dark Age Russia (circa 10th century), and it revolves around the Scandinavian adventurers, Slavic tribesmen, and Eurasian nomads who warred and traded with each other between Kiev and the Black Sea. This historical scenario is supported by the Red Sails: Adventures in the Dark Ages of Eastern Europe campaign articles in DRAGON Magazine *#290, but they are not required to successfully play "Rivers of Blood." It should also be noted that the adventure does not have to be kept in its historical context; it can be played in any fantasy setting.*

The adventure is designed for four 4th-level characters, but can be adjusted to accommodate characters of levels 1-7 using the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. The PCs should have some good combat skills and feats at their disposal. The PCs must make a dangerous river journey, and they will find skills such as Profession (sailor) and Wilderness Lore useful. Diplomacy and investigation will also serve the characters well in certain parts of the adventure.

Magic Items Monsters Non-Player Characters (NPCs) Objects Settlements Traps

Historical Background

You and your players should have a general knowledge of the historical setting before playing this adventure, which can be acquired with the setting support in *DRAGON* #290. Russia in the 10th century (although not called that at the time) was inhabited by numerous Slavic tribes beginning to centralize into large princedoms. These conglomerations were based on the growing trade settlements that dominated the country's river systems connecting the Baltic Sea with the Black Sea and the Orient. Slaves, furs, and honey wax went south in exchange for silver, silk, and other luxury items. The dominant political force came in the form of the Rus: Swedish merchant warriors who settled among the local populations and assimilated with them. The steppes of the south and east were controlled by tribal confederations of Eurasian nomads who competed for control of the Slavs at the edge of their territories with the Rus princes. During the 10th century, the city of Kiev grew in prestige and influence to exert hegemony over the other Rus and Slavs of the north, eclipsing the longstanding dominance of the Khazar Empire of the Caspian region. The times are marked by occasional wars between competing powers of the largest scale, and the more frequent conflicts of regional and local levels.

This adventure is placed near the Dnieper River, just south of Kiev, at the limits of the northern forests and close to the open steppes. It is summer, the time when many Rus and Slavic traders and mercenaries sailed in flotillas to the Black Sea, seeking fortune in Constantinople.

Adventure Background

Two Rus chieftains, Igor and Viseslav, have been fighting skirmishes over the last few months in an attempt to decide who has tribute privileges over some villages that lay between their territories. Viseslav recently killed Igor and most of his warband in an ambush, and is now engaged in an aggressive campaign to take all of the land that now belongs to Igor's widow, Predeslava. Unknown to most, one of Igor's retainers, Boian, set the deadly trap for his lord, and now serves his widow with the same treacherous intent.

At the time of the PCs' arrival, Predeslava is preparing to withstand her enemy's depredations long enough for her brother Ottakar to bring his warband to her aid. Unfortunately, most of his men are away trading in Constantinople and will not return until the fall. Meanwhile, fierce nomad bandits, many of whom are now employed by Viseslav, roam freely

There is little security among them, and much deceit, and even a man's brother or comrade is not above killing and plundering him if he can.

— Ibn Rustah, 10th-century Arab historian, reporting on the Rus

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Rivers of Blood" is designed for four 4th-level PCs, but can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

1st- to 2nd-level PCs: Reduce the number of lesser foes when fighting human warriors by a couple of men for each encounter. Any human leaders or special characters should have their class levels reduced by one, except for Boian and Viseslav, who should probably lose two levels.

Regarding the fantasy monster encounters, the DM should reduce Orimir to a 2nd-level sorcerer and either reduce Sertha's Hit Dice or have her conveniently away looking for special herbs for cooking Dmitri and Vladimir. Halve the number of skeletons, zombies, and worgs. The water elemental should be either Small or Medium-size.

The river should batter characters for only a few rounds (no more than 4) if they fall victim to the rapids (area R1). Reduce the number of wolves and hunters on the random encounter chart and substitute a black bear for the brown bear.

3rd-level PCs: Keep the number of lesser human foes about the same as the suggested modifications for lower level parties, but begin using some of the leaders as presented in the adventure. Consider making Boian only a 2nd-level rogue and Viseslav a 4th-level fighter.

Orimir should be a 3rd-level sorcerer and Sertha can be played as written if her guardian creatures are sufficiently weaker than normal. It is probably easiest to reduce the number of skeletons, zombies, and worgs by half. The water elemental should be Medium-size.

5th- to 7th-level PCs: Add some extra lesser warriors and add levels to the leaders. The light horsemen encounters should have nine men, and Mundiak should have extra levels added as needed. Helgi the White should get extra levels and four more guards. Give Viseslav no more than two levels, but feel free to turn his guards into fighters (2nd or 3rd level), and increase their numbers if necessary. Remember, the PCs should be fresh when they have the showdown with Viseslav.

Add sorcerer levels to both Orimir and Sertha. Change the zombies into ogre (Large) zombies, and double the number of worgs. Add a second ogre shepherd (Krol). The water elemental should be Huge. Sertha's pit traps should be changed into a falling log trap, using the statistics for the Falling Block trap in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 115.

For the random encounters, change the brown bear into a dire bear and the wolves into worgs. The hunters should be led by a higher level fighter. As for the shadow encounter, you can either increase the number of shadows or change one shadow into a wraith.

through Predeslava's lands, looting and taking slaves when they can. Many villages are now deserted, their inhabitants either dead, enslaved, or fled into the wild forests. The numbers of nomad marauders is such that Predeslava's people cannot even seek the security of Ottakar's borders without the likelihood of being killed or captured.

Viseslav hopes to capture Igor's widow before Ottakar gathers his forces. If he can make her one of his wives, he has a good chance of preventing hostilities with his new neighbor. Viseslav's lieutenant, Helgi the White, will soon execute an overwhelming attack against Predeslava's meager village and fort.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins when the characters arrive in Ovotsk, the power center of Predeslava's besieged kingdom. Not long after the PCs are enlisted into service, the adventure truly begins with the characters defending the village from marauding nomad horsemen. Despite the PCs' early success, Ovotsk is overwhelmed by a sneak attack and superior numbers. With the village destroyed and most of its inhabitants captured, the PCs are forced to flee or face capture themselves. Not only do they have the welfare of Predeslava to worry about now, but they are also burdened with a dozen desperate and pathetic refugees.

The PCs embark on a river journey through an allegedly haunted forest and swamp. Their destination is Sarbas, a neutral (more or less) trading settlement. The PCs can seek other escape routes, of course, but it should be clear that their best chance of survival is to avoid the open grassland that separates Predeslava's fallen fort and her brother's stronghold. A useful ally can also be found in Sarbas in the form of Predeslava's uncle Khuritsa, a wealthy merchant.

The river journey confronts the PCs with natural hazards that damage the boat and could cost lives. While traveling by river through the Haunted Wood, the party encounters Orimir, an ogre sorcerer devoted to the local river goddess. A successful parley (and an offer of treasure) will get the PCs past another danger: a water elemental that attacks any boat not bearing Orimir's blessing (an *arcane mark*). Sertha, a green hag, causes problems for the PCs in the fens. The adventurers must choose to rescue a few kidnap victims (Sertha's dinner) or press on to Sarbas.

Sarbas gives the PCs a chance to recover, although it is not long before they are offered a chance to exact revenge on Viseslav and save many of Ovotsk's unfortunates from slavery. The climactic battle scene is set when they learn that Viseslav has arrived in town to dispose of his captives. Although the PCs might engage in an outright brawl in the market square, the party might need to reach a solution beyond combat to free the captive villagers from Viseslav, as they have already been sold to one of Sarbas's families of warrior merchants.

Although this adventure is relatively low in monetary and magic treasure, the adventurers should find ample rewards for defeating Viseslav and rescuing Predeslava's people from the power-hungry tyrant. An epic fight in Sarbas against such a dangerous warlord as Viseslav will certainly give them plenty of fame. If this adventure is used in a historical setting, the characters will also benefit from their encounters with Orimir and Sertha, elevating them to the ranks of legendary heroes (only legendary heroes fight or converse with beings of the Otherworld). With their ties cemented with Predeslava and her uncle, the PCs might choose to continue serving the family after the adventure is over.

Adventure Hooks

The PCs might be friends or kin of Igor, Predeslava, or one of their slain warriors. They might also serve in Ottakar's war-

band or the warband of another ally, and they could have been ordered to assist Predeslava any way they can. The PCs might only be well-intentioned opportunists with bad timing (Igor was actively seeking mercenaries to help in the summer campaign season). These hooks rely on the PCs' sense of revenge, loyalty, fame, political connections, or greed. If none of these work for your characters, a timely ambush by men in Viseslav's army who mistake the PCs for followers of Predeslava will probably be sufficient to get the characters involved in the conflict.

Ovotsk

The first section of this adventure takes place in the environs of the hill fort and village of Ovotsk. This part of the adventure is defined by events, as the PCs are essentially playing a defensive role. The PCs' decisions are still quite important, and they can influence the turbulent crises in which they become immersed. Even though the PCs will not be able to prevent the sacking of Ovotsk, they can certainly make a difference to some of the helpless villagers and those who would subjugate them.

Ovotsk (village): Conventional; AL LN; 200-gp limit; Assets 450 gp; Population 153 (450 normally).

Authority Figures: Predeslava (chieftain's widow), female human Ari1.

Important Characters: Boian, male human Rog2/Ftr1 (Predeslava's bodyguard); Kivna, Adp1 (Wise Woman).

Others: Fort garrison, War1 (×20); Exp1 (×6); Com1 (×124).

Notes: The bulk of Ovotsk's population lived on the eastern side of the river. Once the nomad raids began, those families decided to take their chances foraging in the nearby woods until the summer ends and the nomads seek winter quarters. The village gold piece limit and total assets remain normal at this time, as most of the craftsman and small merchants are located near Predeslava's fort.

Event 1. Igor's Funeral. Read or summarize the following once the PCs arrive in Ovotsk:

> A quiet crowd gathers around the village's barrow mounds, bidding farewell to their lord and protector, Igor Jaroslavich. In his small boat he is accompanied by all the things he will need in the Otherworld: food, furs, weapons, precious silver armbands, and more. Predeslava, his strong widow, is easily recognizable by her dark blond hair, pale blue eyes, fair skin, and square jaw. She stands out among her people, as she is the only person holding a torch. An old wise woman, playing the part of the Death Crone, recites a few frightening chants, her raspy voice rising and falling as she circles Igor's death barge. When she is silent, Predeslava comes forward to light the kindling upon which the ship rests. Suddenly, the lazy flames burst as if in a frenzy, taking Igor to the heavens in a billowing cloud of smoke.

Once she becomes aware of their presence, Predeslava invites the PCs to her stone hall, the only building not made of timber or wattle-and-daub in Ovotsk. There she will discuss terms of service and give them a full assessment of the conflict with Viseslav. Except for the details concerning Boian's betrayal, the information presented in the "Adventure Background" can be given to the players at this time. Although she is confident Ovotsk itself will weather the depredations of the wild nomad marauders, the aid of the PCs is certainly welcome. It is going to be a long summer, and Predeslava expects horsemen to arrive soon. She is not sure if Viseslav has the men or the courage to actually attack her hill fort; it is likely to cost him most of his warband if he attempts a bloody assault.

If the PCs swear to protect her and follow her orders, she will pay them handsomely for several months of service. Once her brother arrives with his warband in the fall, the PCs obligation to her ends. She gives each character an amber bead necklace (300 gp), a gold bracelet (400 gp), and a hack silver bracelet (100 gp). The hack silver bracelet can be broken up and used as currency.

Predeslava, Female Human Ari1: CR –; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in.); HD 1d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 11; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger) or +0 ranged (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL LN; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills: Appraise +2, Bluff +3, Diplomacy +5, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +3, Knowledge (religion) +2, Sense Motive +3. *Feats:* Iron Will, Toughness.

Possessions: Golden grivna (Eastern torc) (600 gp), silver-hilted dagger with silvered runes etched in blade (300 gp), silver ring with amber (200 gp).

Development: Predeslava is smart and determined, and she sometimes seems quite headstrong. She is committed to both her people and her desire for vengeance. She will be dismayed when Ovotsk actually falls and filled with cold, murderous intent when Boian is revealed as a traitor. She will not spend a lot of time regretting her decision to stand up to Viseslav, committing herself to paying him back tenfold for the slaughter and misery he has inflicted on herself and her people. Simply giving herself up, even to stop the suffering of her subjects, has never occurred to her.

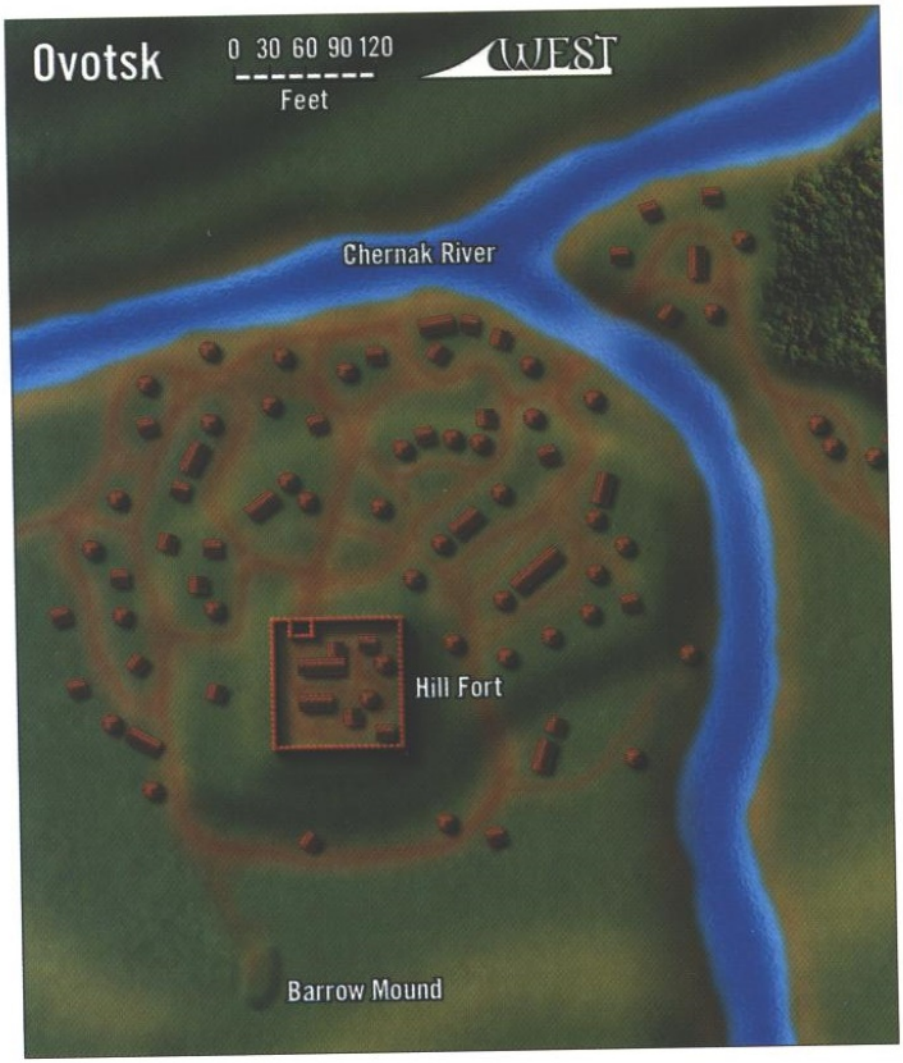
Creature (EL 3): Also integral to this adventure is the despicable Boian. He is a human of average height and build with dark brown hair, a long mustache, gray eyes, and red cheeks.

Boian looks out for himself. It was easy to present the façade of being a worthy member of a chieftain's warband because the right opportunities never came along before now. He betrayed Igor and the warband for treasure, not out of any personal dislike. Boian is an accomplished liar, and if he were more intuitive, he would truly be a grand schemer. His role is the saboteur, albeit one who does not know his limits.

Boian, Male Human Rog2/Ftr1: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 11 in.); HD 2d6+2 plus 1d10+1; hp 19; Init +6 (+4 Improved Initiative, +2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 studded leather, +2 Dex); Atk +5 melee (1d6/crit 19-20, short sword), +2 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger), or +4 ranged (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +6, Climb +6, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +7, Jump +5, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +7, Sense Motive +5, Swim +3. *Feats:* Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (short sword), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: Studded leather armor, short sword, four daggers (one hidden in sheath sewn into tunic behind the neck), hack silver bracelet (200 gp), and a pouch containing 50 sp and three pieces of amber (300 gp each).



A cloaked rider gallops into the village, his horse frothing and beginning to stagger. He tumbles off of his mount into the waiting hands of some villagers. At first, a few shouts echo back and forth across Ovotsk's clutter of huts, then an alarm is raised.

"Pechenegs!" The fear of the village is almost palpable at hearing the name of the steppes' most dreaded nomads. As the village explodes into panic, a sentry points to the rolling ridge south of the settlement. Over a dozen horsemen bolt across its crest, a jumbled mass of fury headed straight for the village. Although several villagers have made it to the safety of Predeslava's stockade, many more are struggling to bring their families and animals up the hill to the safety of its walls.

It is too late for them, it seems, as the nomad warriors gallop through the village, herding the frightened villagers and animals away from the little fort.

Development: Boian takes some interest in the PCs, trying to learn as much about them as he can. He pretends to be shamed by outliving Igor (a good retainer dies with his lord) and does not like to talk about the fateful battle. If pressed, he says he took a blow to the head and was apparently left for dead. If PCs are suspicious of Boian, allow them to make Sense Motive checks opposed by Boian's Bluff checks.

Waiting for the Storm

A week or so passes before the first sign of the enemy at Ovotsk. In that time, the PCs can content themselves to feasting and drinking in Predeslava's hall. If the PCs decide to patrol the surrounding area, they will encounter only local farmers and hunters, as well as an assortment of game. Predeslava discourages the PCs from going on patrols, as she already has a few scouts and she does not want to lose her new guards to an ambush.

You should move through this section fairly quickly to keep the pace of the game going. It is here mostly to serve as a "state of affairs" before the action, and to provide you with a way to provide action for PCs who cannot sit still.

Event 2. Enemy at the Gate. This event takes place one morning after the PCs have been in Ovotsk for a week or so.

Even though the village is under attack by about twenty horsemen, this encounter will be much easier to resolve than the sheer numbers might indicate. The nomads are broken up into smaller groups, allowing for separate encounters between the three of them. An aggressive defense by the PCs will likely win the day for Ovotsk, as the nomads are only looking to gather as much plunder and captives as they can without having to fight too much for it. Their lives are worth more to them than loot and glory in battle.

Boian stays within the stockade to protect Predeslava and encourage the wall defenders.

Creatures (EL 5, EL 5, and EL 7): The three groups of raiders each have six horsemen, although the EL 7 encounter also includes their leader, Mundiak.

Pechenegs are distinguished from other nomads by their black caps made of fur or felt, and they sometimes wear Arab-style overcoats. The Pechenegs also wear loose tunics, baggy pants, and tall boots.

Bands #1 and #2 (EL 5 each)

Eurasian Light Horsemen, Male Human War1 (6): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in.); HD 1d8+1; hp 7 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+1 padded, +1 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d6/crit 18-20, scimitar), +1 melee (1d8/crit ×3, shortspear), or +2 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, composite short bow); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +4, Ride +5. *Feats:* Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat.

Possessions: Thick fur corselet (acts as padded armor), scimitar, two shortspears, composite short bow with 20 arrows, pouch containing 100 sp.

Light Warhorses (6): hp 22 each; *Monster Manual* 197.

Band #3 (EL 7)

Eurasian Light Horsemen, Male Human War1 (6): see "Bands #1 and #2" for complete statistics.

Mundiak, Male Human Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 3d10+3; hp 26; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+4 chain shirt, +1 shield, +4 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/crit 18-20, scimitar), or +9 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, composite short bow); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Craft (bowmaking) +4, Handle Animal +5, Ride +10, Spot +3. *Feats:* Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Ride-By Attack, Weapon Focus (composite short bow).

Possessions: Chain shirt, small wooden shield, scimitar, masterwork composite short bow with 20 arrows, silver cloakpin with amber (400 gp), bronze chain belt (100 gp), silver chain belt (300 gp), pouch containing 4 bloodstones (worth 50 gp each) and 200 sp.

Light Warhorse (7): hp 30; *Monster Manual* 197.

Tactics (Bands #1 & #2): The Pechenegs do their best to keep their distance from the PCs, attacking them with bow fire from their horses. The raiders close for melee if the PCs seem visibly weakened or if a character becomes separated from the group. If the PCs do not allow the nomads to leisurely fill them with arrows, the Pechenegs hold their ground, always looking for a chance to gang up on a weak PC. There is no real cooperation between the bands of horsemen, as each raider is more concerned with riding away with a captive or some cattle than wasting valuable time in combat.

If a Pecheneg band loses half its men, the survivors disengage and attempt to cover their retreat with volleys of arrows. A Pecheneg attempts to ride away if his mount is seriously wounded (at 50% hit points). A nomad that is unhorsed attempts to recapture his mount if possible. The PCs should find spells and abilities that influence the behavior of animals useful in their battle with the nomads. Refer to the *Player's Handbook,* page 139, for assistance in running encounters with mounted combat.

Tactics (Band 3): Mundiak and his bodyguards are a little more determined than the other bands. They still try to soften the PCs with bow fire and will not hesitate to engage in melee if necessary. Mundiak uses his Ride-By Attack feat as often as he can. Mundiak's guards flee only if Mundiak is killed, but Mundiak flees if his guards are all eliminated. If the PCs decide to break off combat, Mundiak and his men pursue them until they are within the walls of the stockade. It can be assumed some light missile volleys from the fort garrison keeps Mundiak from actually coming within 30 feet of the fort's gates.

Event 3. The Storm. A week or so passes before the real battle for Ovotsk takes place. If the PCs were successful in driving away the Pecheneg raiders, that time will be quite pleasant for them as everyone treats them as if they were heroes of epic legend. Boian congratulates the PCs, not bothered by being overshadowed by the newcomers. In fact, he tells them he sincerely wishes they had been standing with Igor in his last battle (very sincerely, as they would be dead and not pose a problem for him now).

Predeslava is proud of the PCs as well, but more reserved; she knows Ovotsk has more struggles ahead. It is not long before she is proved right.

Read or paraphrase the following text when Helgi the White attacks the village one week after the first skirmish:

> As the sun crests the eastern horizon, screams rise from the village below to dispel the peace of the morning. Fires rage across Ovotsk, stray sparks birthing new flames on the dry thatch roofs.
>
> Three ominous boats wait on the river shore while their crews proceed about the savage business of slaughter and pillage. The first captives are shoved aboard the red-sailed ships as the alarm is raised.
>
> Methodically, almost casually, a mob of well-armed warriors emerges from the chaos and misery of the burning village, stopping about 100 feet from the fort's gates. One of the men puts a horn to his lips and blows long, announcing their challenge. Another warrior plants a tall spear into the earth, a raven banner waving under its metal point. Next to him stands a man who seems as tall as a great tree, his hair as wild and white as rushing water. His goggle helm turns his eyes into dark holes, complimenting his terrible countenance.
>
> "It is over, my lady!" bellows Helgi the White.

It is clear that none of the villagers are able to make it to the safety of the stockade walls. It does not take urging from Predeslava to spur the fort garrison to action, and they quickly prepare to meet the enemy at the bottom of the hill. The PCs do not have to participate in the battle, but the garrison is going with or without them. Predeslava will have nothing to do with the PCs if they do not prove themselves worthy and at least attempt to stop the carnage below. Helgi defeats the garrison if the PCs do not assist. Once this happens, Predeslava retreats to her hall to join Igor in death; Helgi will find Igor's old hall a funeral pyre.

It should be noted that Helgi is accompanied by the only professional warriors in the raid, easily identified by their rich assortment of arms. The raiders who are actually plundering Ovotsk are relatively poorly armed, with most of those warriors only having spears and shields. It is the garrison's hope that if they can defeat Helgi and his host, the pillaging rabble will lose their courage and flee.

If the PCs join the attack, the place of honor for fighting class PCs is in the center of the line, leading the lower class warriors to glory. Boian takes his rightful place in the middle of the gathering crowd of warriors outside the stockade gates.

Creatures (EL 6): There are probably forty elite warriors at Helgi's side at the hill's base, but this encounter only pits the PCs against Helgi, his bodyguards, and Boian. To keep player suspense alive, make some rolls for the peripheral conflicts. You might want to use some form of opposed rolls that only indicate how one side is doing, but not go into details like how many hit points Warrior X lost, or how many hits he scored. The PCs should feel concerned by the outcome of the peripheral battles, but they should also feel like their part is pivotal, deciding the contest for one and all.

Helgi the White, Male Human Ftr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 4d10+11 (includes Toughness feat); hp 40; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+4 chain shirt, +2 shield); Atk +8 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, battleaxe), +6 melee (1d8+2/crit 19-20, longsword), or +4 ranged (1d6+2, throwing axe); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 11.

SHIPS AND SAILING

Monoxyla

This ship is similar in build to the Viking knarr (the knarr is equivalent to the D&D keelboat), but smaller. Most monoxyla measure between 20 and 40 feet long, and about 10 feet wide. Although a monoxyla has a small sail, it is often propelled by oar. The crew numbers between four and eight, and cargo capacity is about five tons or 40 men. It has a speed of 15 with average sailing conditions and cargo in this tributary of the Dnieper, although a strong breeze, current, or crew can double that for short periods of time. A monoxyla costs 500 gp.

All Hands On Deck

For the PCs to effectively sail the monoxyla, the boat crew must meet the following requirements:

1. The number of total crewman must number at least four. This includes the shipmaster and the navigator (see below).

2. The shipmaster must have Profession (sailor) skill. If none of the PCs has this skill, assume at least one of the refugee commoners has it. The shipmaster will be able to direct an unskilled crew.

3. The navigator keeps watch at the fore. His job is to alert the crew to river hazards such as sandbars and submerged rocks. This crewman must make successful Wilderness Lore checks (DC varies) to assist the crew in safely avoiding dangerous obstacles. Although the Profession (sailor) skill is not required, the character gets a +2 synergy bonus to his Wilderness Lore checks if he has at least 5 ranks in Profession (sailor).

4. With a crew this small, it is possible for one character to be both shipmaster and navigator, as long as the character has Profession (sailor).

Skills: Climb +8, Craft (shipmaking) +7, Ride +6, Swim -3*.
Feats: Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe).

*Includes the -1 penalty to Swim checks per 5 pounds of gear carried.

Possessions: Chain shirt, large wooden shield, Viking goggle helm decorated with a gilded boar crest (400 gp), masterwork battleaxe, longsword, two throwing axes, two gold rings (100 gp each), gold decorated sword sheath (75 gp), pouch containing 20 gp, 100 sp, and a garnet (200 gp).

Noble Warriors, Male Human War1 (4): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft.); HD 1d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 11 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+4 chain shirt, +2 shield); Atk +2 melee (1d8/crit ×3, battleaxe), +1 melee (1d8/crit 19-20, longsword), or +1 ranged (1d6, javelin); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Con 11, Dex 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Intimidate +4, Profession (sailor) +4, Swim +-7*.
Feats: Toughness, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

*Includes the -1 penalty to Swim checks per 5 pounds of gear carried.

Possessions: Chain shirt, large wooden shield, battleaxe, longsword, three javelins, hack silver bracelet (100 gp), bronze grivna (Eastern torc) (50 gp), pouch with 10 gp and 60 sp.

Tactics: Helgi and his warband wait for the garrison to attack them; Helgi is not going to waste his energy charging up a hill, or worse, frightening his enemy back into the stockade. A fight in the open, even if it gives his weak enemies the chance to charge downhill at him, is preferable to having to storm the fort walls.

Boian takes this opportunity to make a sneak attack against one of the PC warriors right before the two groups engage. He has joined the battle because he knows it would be too suspicious if he stayed behind to guard Predeslava. If he can disable one of the PCs, he can prove to Helgi that he is not merely a skulking traitor who betrays with words and deceptions. Boian knows his usefulness is over as soon as Predeslava is captured. He does not want to give the tempestuous Helgi a reason to refuse payment for his services or to pay him with a sword thrust.

Helgi and his bodyguards fight to the death, although Boian fights only as long as it looks like he has a chance of living (and being on the winning side). If Helgi is killed or otherwise incapacitated, the morale of the warband breaks and they retreat; his bodyguards continue to fight to the end, attempting to avenge their leader. Boian flees as quickly as he can once the battle is lost for the invaders.

Once Helgi's warband loses its stomach for the fight, the surviving members of the garrison are overtaken by bloodlust and throw themselves into the alarmed pillagers, ignoring any plans or orders given by the PCs.

Encounter Level Note: If any of the PCs attempt to assist in the peripheral combats between the garrison and Helgi's warband, consider adding +1 EL to the overall encounter. This award is really aimed at those PCs who might be playing a supporting role by using missile weapons and spells, but it applies to other actions and circumstances. As far as the PCs are concerned, the "staged combat" occurring all around them is real and might need their attention. If the PCs "waste" good spells and powers on a combat that they are not really influencing in a game sense, they should be rewarded for roleplaying.

Event 4. Panic in Ovotsk. Read or paraphrase the following if Helgi is killed or incapacitated:

> The bloody fight with Helgi is over, and news of his defeat quickly spreads among the enemies pillaging the burning village. Fear can be heard in the voices of those who had so recently preyed on the weak and defenseless. Howling with fury, Predeslava's warriors set upon them, showing no mercy to any they catch. A desperate struggle ensues on the banks of the river as the raiders try to scramble aboard their ships and escape.

The PCs have a chance to prevent one of the ships from leaving with its captives if they join the vicious counterattack. One ship is currently unhindered by Ovotsk's warriors, as the raiders have put up a successful rearguard action.

Creatures (EL 4): These warriors are tribal levies who joined Helgi for the promise of plunder. Like Predeslava's garrison, they can be relied upon when defending their homes, but when campaigning, they need a strong leader like Helgi to stay in line. Helgi did not want them for the battle itself, but to force Predeslava's warriors into an attack to save the village. They want only to survive long enough to sell their new captives.

Tribal Warriors, Male Human War1 (9): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft.); HD 1d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp

9; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 large shield); Atk +2 melee (1d8/crit ×3, shortspear), +1 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger), or +2 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, shortspear); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +2, Profession (farmer, fisher, or herdsman) +2, Swim -2*. *Feats:* Toughness, Weapon Focus (shortspear).

*Includes the -1 penalty to Swim checks per 5 pounds of gear carried.

Possessions: Large steel shield, three shortspears, dagger.

Tactics: Four of the warriors try to prevent to PCs from reaching the ship, while the other five try to push the ship farther into the water. If the rearguard can hold off the PCs for 5 rounds, anyone wanting to board the boat will need to make a Swim check (DC 10) to reach it. None of these warriors surrender; they either fight to the death or escape.

The boat has twenty captive villagers on board.

Aftermath and Exodus

Only a few warriors from the garrison survive the battle, but with the help of the PCs, they save almost one hundred villagers from enslavement. As there is no real safety in Ovotsk, most of the villagers will retreat to the nearby woods, hoping to avoid future raids. Predeslava tries to convince her people to consider hiding in the Haunted Wood to the west, a place so inhospitable even Viseslav's men will not venture there, no matter what price he has placed on Predeslava's head. Only a dozen village folk will join her, as most are more afraid of the spirits and savages that live there than they are of death or captivity at the hands of Viseslav's ruthless warriors.

The fastest and best way to reach the Haunted Wood is by river. If the PCs were able to stop the fleeing raiders, they have access to a small cargo ship of their own; if they did not succeed in their efforts, then one of the local merchants who owns a boat will gladly surrender it to his lady's service, as he cannot take it with him while foraging in the nearby forest.

Predeslava secretly plans to journey past the Haunted Wood and reach the trading settlement of Sarbas, where she has family (see Uncle Khuritsa in the Sarbas section of the adventure). She fully expects some of her people to be captured and then interrogated regarding her whereabouts, so she would prefer Viseslav's men waste their time waiting for her to come out of the Haunted Wood instead of drawing them to Sarbas. She reveals this once the boat reaches the forest.

Refer to the "Ships and Sailing" and "New Equipment" sidebars for information about the small riverboats commonly used in Dark Age Russia and for details on properly navigating and crewing the PCs' boat.

The Chernak River

This tributary of the Dnieper is relatively slow (about 1 mph), and varies between 20+1d20 feet wide. Typical depth is 6+2d4 feet. Rocks and sandbars present nuisances to those sailing the river's course, but most of them are easily avoided. Once the river enters the Haunted Wood, it takes on a much wilder character. After filling the lake at the edge of the forest, the Chernak forces itself through the Witch Fens, splitting into shallow channels and fetid pools. The main artery of the Chernak barely moves (speed of 5 feet) through the swamp, and its width and depth are reduced as well (10+1d10 feet wide, 6+1d4 feet deep).

Haunted Woods Encounters

As long as the PCs are near the shore when their monoxyla is beached, do not roll for random encounters. Should the PCs venture beyond the river (foraging or hunting, perhaps), roll 1d10 and consult the table below:

Roll	Result
1-6	No Encounter
7	Brown Bear (EL 4)
8	Wolves (EL 4)
9	Hunters (EL 4)
10	Shadow (EL 3)

Brown Bear: hp 51; *Monster Manual* 193. This creature attacks the PCs if surprised or approached.

Wolves (6): hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 204. These creatures hunt the PCs until they reach the safety of camp. If they can bring down one character, they will leave the others alone.

Hunters, Male Human Warı (9): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 9; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger), or +2 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +2, Profession (hunter) +2, Swim +4. *Feats:* Toughness, Weapon Focus (shortbow).

Possessions: Shortbow with 20 arrows, dagger.

The hunters are local Haunted Wood Slavs. They are very suspicious of the PCs, although they attack only if the characters threaten them. Refer to the NPC Attitudes rules in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 149, for handling this encounter. Treat the hunters as initially Unfriendly.

Shadow: hp 19; *Monster Manual* 161. This monster attempts to slay as many of the characters as it can, hoping to bolster its ranks with more shadows.

It will probably take the characters about a day to reach the Haunted Wood, and another two to reach the Witch Fens. This travel time assumes there are no delays.

Haunted Wood

The Haunted Wood is actually inhabited, albeit sparsely, by fiercely independent Slavic clans. No Rus or Scandinavian warlord has met with any success at subjugating the little thorps that are sprinkled about this forbidding forest. It is believed that the Slavs who live there are strongly protected by the spirits of their ancestors as well as spirits of the forest.

When the PCs enter the Haunted Wood, read or paraphrase the text below:

The river narrows as it passes from the open grassland into the Haunted Wood. The shade of the great trees surrounding you increases as the Chernak quietly moves forward. Long stretches of the river are enclosed by a canopy of grasping limbs above, turning the world as dark as a moonless night. Even when the water widens and the sun's blessed rays strike the blue body beneath the boat, the limbs above beckon to one another until they embrace again, sheltering all below in false night once more.

Give the Haunted Wood a supernatural atmosphere. The PCs should feel as if they are in a place where they are definitely outsiders, watched by the spirits that dwell in the forest and river. For effect, you might tell a PC she sees something dart behind a tree, but only out of the corner of her eye. Another PC might glimpse the transparent face of an unearthly woman in the swirl of a river eddy. These ideas are not to generate any real game encounters, but to put the players in the right mood.

It is quite possible the PCs will encounter the human Slavs who dwell within the protective Haunted Wood. A few thorps are noted on the map (although others undoubtedly exist).

Typical Thorp: Conventional; AL LN; 40-gp limit; Assets 20 gp × 0.1 × Population; 20-80 (humans only).

Authority Figures: Zupan (a clan chieftain), typically a warrior (level 1d6); volkh (a shaman), an adept of level 1d4.

Important Characters: Create as needed. Most NPCs will be 1st-level commoners, but a few key characters who are important to your campaign can easily find a home in one of these small settlements.

Others: Please refer to Chapter 4: Adventures in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Notes: Most buildings are semi-subterranean dwellings, with aboveground walls constructed of wattle-and-daub or timber. The roofs are made of thatch. Small farm plots and animal pens are attached to most dwellings.

NPC Attitudes: Consider the Slavic inhabitants as Unfriendly toward anyone from outside the Haunted Wood. Well-armed strangers are unwelcome, and those who are accompanied by hungry refugees more so. Please refer to the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 149, regarding the PCs' chances of influencing the inhospitable tribal Slavs with Charisma or Diplomacy checks.

R1. The Rapids. Read or paraphrase the following text when the PCs reach the Chernak's rough water:

> Large rocks poke above the surface of the river frequently as the river begins to wind and curve, and the boat is squeezed between the high banks of the wooded shores. The boat lurches from side to side and plummets a few feet when it slips over small waterfalls. The Chernak grows louder, and its hiss fills the air like the blue and white explosions that burst against the hull.

There is no place for the PCs to beach the craft due to the steep banks and rushing water. Should it become an issue, the banks are approximately 20 feet higher than the water level.

Trap (EL 4): This natural hazard can deal damage to the ship and its navigator. The navigator must make a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) to direct the crew safely through the rocks; all normal check modifiers listed in the "Ship Rules" sidebar apply. Failure indicates minor damage to the ship, requiring 1d4 days to repair. A failure of 5 points or more means the ship sustains major damage, requiring 2d4 days to repair. The navigator must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 15) if the Wilderness Lore check fails. Failure means the PC is thrown overboard and subject to battering and drowning. Unless the character is recovered from the water, he takes 1d6 points of damage each round from smashing into rocks and tumbling down cascades. The battering waters last for 8 rounds. In addition, each round the character must make a Swim check (DC 15); failure requires the character to make another check. Failing this second check means the character is pulled underwater. Refer to Water Dangers in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (pages 85-86) for details.

River Rapids: CR 4; 1d6 points of damage per round and drowning; Reflex save avoids (DC 15); Wilderness Lore (DC 15) acts as Disable Device check.

PCs can attempt to rescue a character who has gone overboard. Rescuers who make a successful Swim or Use Rope skill check (DC 10) can add a +2 circumstance bonus to a victim's Swim checks (see the Aid Another rule in the *Player's Handbook,* page 135). A character can easily be fished out of the water once past the rapids, as the river becomes quite shallow.

R2. Servant of the River Goddess. Read or paraphrase the following text when the PCs reach this section of the river:

> The river passes by a pool that is probably 30 feet in diameter. A large, monolithic stone marks the boundary between the pool and river, jutting out of the water some 10 feet. Strange runes are etched across on its surface.
>
> An ogre using a massive spear to bob a line and hook in the water sits cross-legged by the pool.

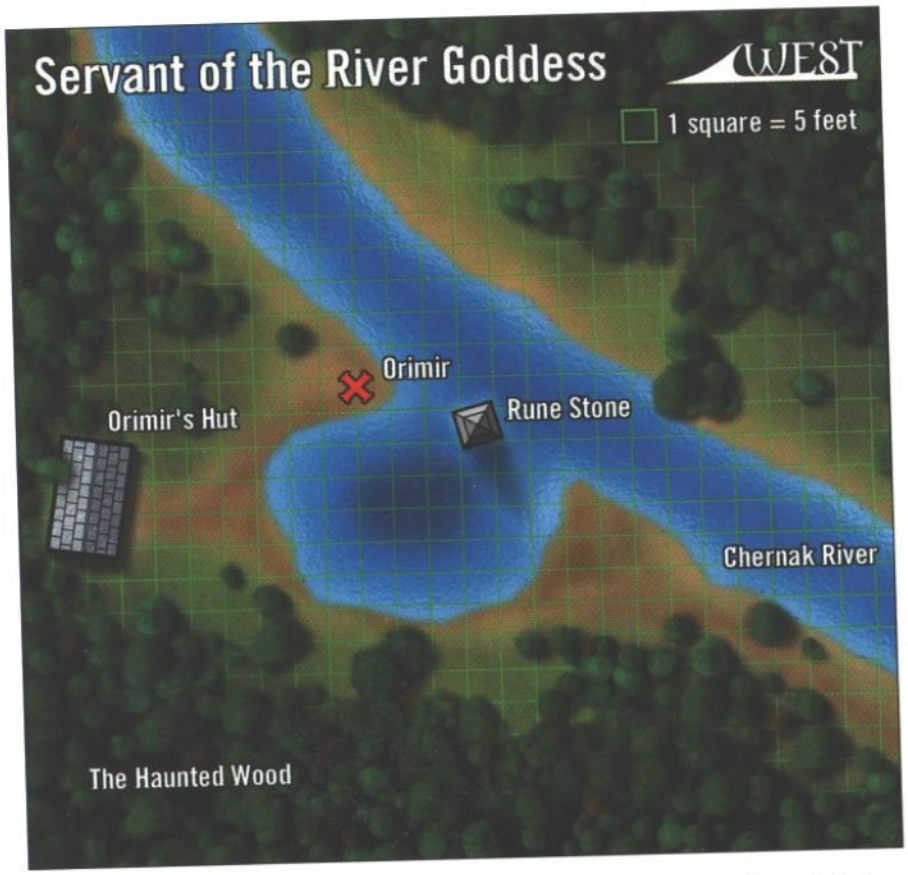
A successful Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (religion) check (DC 10) identifies the runes as symbols of the local river goddess, as well as others invoking protection, healing, and knowledge. A successful bardic knowledge check (DC 20) reveals this, as well as that the pool is supposedly magical (see "Development" below).

If the PCs do not immediately attack, the ogre addresses them in Slavic (loudly but not fluently). Read or paraphrase the text below:

> "Pay homage to the River Goddess or sail no further upon her waters!" commands the ogre. "The Pool awaits your gifts."

Creature (EL 6): Orimir, an ogre sorcerer devoted to the River Goddess demands tribute for the deity from the rare boat traffic that passes by. The ogres of Russian and Scandinavian legend were believed to have magical powers, although some were just brutes. If this adventure is being played in a historical setting, the PCs might suspect that Orimir has supernatural abilities. His appearance is much the same as the normal ogre, but his clothing is much better. Orimir wears a long tunic, baggy trousers, and a wolf fur cloak.

Orimir, Male Ogre Sor4: CR 6; Large Giant (9 ft. 7 in.); HD 4d8+8 plus 4d4+8; hp 50; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +10 melee (2d6+7 huge greatclub), or +3 ranged (2d6+5/crit ×3, Huge longspear); Reach 10 ft. (15-20 ft. with longspear); AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 21, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 13.



Skills: Climb +4, Concentration +4, Knowledge (arcana) +2, Knowledge (religion) +2, Listen +2, Spellcraft +2, Spot +3. *Feats:* Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (Enchantment), Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Spells (6/7/3 per day; base DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, disrupt undead, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1st—*charm person, mage armor, magic missile;* 2nd—*mirror image.*

Possessions: Two *potions of cure light wounds, ring of jumping,* Huge longspear, Huge greatclub, silver bracelet (300 gp), pouch containing an amber (100 gp), a citrine (50 gp), 20 gp, and 100 sp.

Tactics: Although he carries a mighty club at his side, Orimir sincerely wishes for a peaceful encounter. Ignoring or attacking Orimir might cause the PC's grief later, if not sooner. A good parley with this pious giant not only assists them in their river journey, but if things go really well, they might earn a unique ally.

If the PCs try to bypass Orimir without harming him in any way, he will not attack them, but he declares they have cursed themselves. "The Children of the River Goddess will feed upon your ungrateful hearts!"

If the PCs try to bypass Orimir but hurl missiles or spells at him, he casts *mirror image* and *mage armor* on himself. Next he casts *charm person* against an enemy to make the assailant leave him alone. If this fails, then he begins hurling *magic missiles,* targeting enemy spellcasters first. If the PCs manage to deal a lot of damage to Orimir (reducing him to 60% of hit points) and he depletes his *magic missiles,* he uses his *ring of jumping* to land in the PCs' boat, if possible. The enraged ogre withdraws from combat if reduced to 20% of his hit points.

If the PCs answer Orimir's ultimatum with a shore party attack, he fights to the death.

Orimir directs PCs to the pool to make their offerings if they choose to parley with him. A Knowledge (religion) check (DC 10) means characters know a religious offering should be something of real value. Jewelry or well-crafted items are expected from the upper classes (which the adventurers most likely are). If the PC's toss 300-500 gp worth of goods into the pool, Orimir is satisfied. If the PCs offer more than 500 gp in jewelry, they have made a friend (see the "Development" section). If the PCs are short on goods that would make a suitable offering, Predeslava can offer her silver ring set with amber (200 gp value) to help the cause. If the PCs do opt to attack, none of the other passengers help, as they're far too intimidated by the fearsome ogre.

Once the PCs have made the proper offering, Orimir places his *arcane mark* on the keel of their boat. The mark represents his personal name, but includes symbols of the River Goddess. He states the magic runes will identify them as worthies to the Child of the River Goddess. Orimir performs a ritual blessing and lets the PCs go their way.

Treasure: A small collection of precious items has gathered at the bottom of the pool of the River Goddess, 20 feet below the surface. The pool contains a gold bracelet (50 gp), a silver coffer (400 gp), and nine gems worth 500 gp (×2), 100 gp (×3), and 50 gp (×4). A successful Search check (DC 25) locates these items plus any the PCs might contribute. It should go without saying that Orimir does not tolerate the removal of offerings to the River Goddess.

Development: Generous PCs are welcome to stay for a while with Orimir, but he does not have provisions to feed any refugees that might be accompanying them. Orimir is mildly interested in the news of the world, but only as it might affect life in the Haunted Wood. He knows a covey of hags dwell in the fens past the Haunted Wood and bids the PCs to take every precaution. He also tells them a little of the mysteries of the River Goddess and reveals some of the magical properties of the sacred pool.

The water in the pool can increase the effectiveness of potions related to healing. Any *cure wounds* potion created with the pool's water provides the maximum healing allowed, as if the brewer had used the Maximize Spell feat when making the potion. To be effective, the water must be *blessed* upon taking it from the pool. Each amount taken from the pool (clay jug, waterskin, glass bottle, and so on) will make one potion. The *bless* spell preserves the water's special properties for one week plus one day per level of the caster. After that, the water becomes normal if it has not been made into a potion. Subsequent *bless* spells cannot prolong the duration of the water's properties past the original timeframe. A successful

Spellcraft or bardic knowledge check (DC 20) enables a character to determine the pool's properties.

The PC's should be awarded experience for Orimir only if they sacrifice enough treasure to receive his *arcane mark* or if they defeat him in combat. Since the ogre is not determined to stop the faithless, bypassing the monster is no great task.

R3. Child of the River Goddess. If the PCs received Orimir's *arcane mark* on their ship, read or paraphrase the following text:

> The lake is calm and wide, and no breeze disturbs the blue surface. Before long, the boat seems to propel itself toward the river exit on the far side of the lake. The boat moves fast enough that the sails blow backward.

If the characters did not receive Orimir's *arcane mark*, read or paraphrase the following text:

> The lake is calm and wide, with no breeze disturbing its blue surface. Before long, though, the water seems to boil around the boat. The timbers of the keel creak and bulge inward, and suddenly the boat begins to lurch from side to side.

Creature: (EL 5): A water elemental resides in the lake. Besides the elemental, there is nothing unusual about the water. It communicates with Orimir whenever the ogre makes short pilgrimages to the lake on certain holy days. It assists or harasses mortals based on the conditions listed above.

Large Water Elemental: hp 68; *Monster Manual* 84.

Tactics: The elemental merely speeds marked boats across the water. If the PCs attack the elemental, it retaliates.

The elemental tries to sink the boat after initially threatening with its underwater buffets. To do this, it needs to deal 20 points of damage to the vessel, which has a hardness of 5. This amount of damage is enough to put a hole in the hull, causing the boat to begin taking on water. If left unattended, it will sink in 1d6 rounds. In addition, its speed is reduced by half. Passengers can bail water to prevent the boat from sinking. For every two passengers who bail water, reduce the number of rounds before the boat sinks by one. NPCs in the boat will begin bailing only if directed by the PCs to do so, as they all respond to the attack with complete panic. Once there is a hole in the vessel, the elemental attacks until it has either killed one of the PCs (thus appeasing the river goddess with a sacrifice of some value) or it has lost 50% of its hit points. The creature prefers to use slam attacks, but if a PC should go below the surface, it uses its vortex ability.

A few things are in the PCs favor should the elemental attack them. They are only 30 feet from shore when the attack occurs, and the lake is only 40 feet deep at that point. Should combat ensue, other passengers pitch in to defeat the elemental, although only 1d4 of them can reach it in a given round.

Development: The elemental returns a year after it is destroyed, should the PCs manage that feat. Orimir knows of the conflict and treats the PCs as enemies should he encounter them later.

The Witch Fens

Read or paraphrase the following text when the PCs reach the Witch Fens:

> As chilling as the Haunted Wood is, this desolate marsh makes your stomach feel small and sick. The Chernak turns sluggish, as if it does not wish to venture into this tangled mass of unruly weeds. Where the trees of the Haunted Wood seemed alive and ready to strike, the trees that dot the wet fields of the Witch Fens look dead, and they would not look odd if hanged men swung from their blackened limbs.

As noted in the Chernak River description, the main channel flowing through the Witch Fens is slow (speed of 5 feet). The marsh is covered in thick vegetation, murky pools, and deep mud. Clumps of trees offer the only landmarks.

The Fens are dominated by a covey of hags: Sertha (green hag), Abaava (green hag), and Volkul (annis). Sertha is the only hag the PCs will encounter during this adventure, but the others can be developed for later adventures.

The Witch Fens are also home to some isolated Slavic clans that fear the hags who prowl the marshes. They are much more hostile than those of the Haunted Wood, and encounters with them usually end violently. They are masters at ambushing and evading the slaver expeditions from Sarbas, and the raiders rarely find anything more than arrows in their backs and deserted hamlets. There are no planned or random encounters with these human inhabitants of the Witch Fens in this adventure, but you might find their existence helpful in designing future adventures in the Sarbas region.

Event 5. Missing! This event occurs on the morning after the PCs have spent their first night in the Witch Fens. Two of the refugees, Dmitri and Vladimir, have disappeared after trying their luck at fishing in a nearby pool in the early morning hours. Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs investigate:

> The footprints of the young men mark the muddy shore of their chosen fishing hole. The prints circle about the pool and disappear into the brush on the other side. Their fishing poles and a small pile of fish still wait for them.

As the ground is soft and muddy, a PC with the Track feat can make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 5) to follow Dmitri and Vladimir. A character without the Track feat will be able to use the Search skill (DC 10) as well. The two sets of prints soon join a third set made by someone with small, bare feet, possibly a woman. Their tracks march almost in a straight line, only deviating to bypass quagmires and murky ponds, until they reach a well-used animal trail. All three disappear at that point and are replaced by another set of bare footprints: This set is large, sinking deep into the earth between large strides. The new prints follow the nature trail, roughly heading east.

Dmitri and Vladimir were foolish enough to follow *dancing lights* cast by Sertha, and then they pursued her shapely silhouette after she used her *change self* ability. Once they reached the trail that leads to her lair, she used her weakness ability to subdue them and carried them home with her (she did not want to have to carry them all the way from the fishing hole). She did not use her pass without trace ability because she does not care whether other mortal snacks invite themselves to her hut for dinner.

If the PCs continue their hunt for Dmitri and Vladimir by following the hag's tracks, you should begin using the "Isle of the Witch" encounters.

Isle of the Witch

The following encounters are keyed to the Isle of the Witch map above.

W1. The Pits. Read or paraphrase the following after the PCs have followed the hag's tracks for a mile or so:

> An open pit straddles the trail at this point. A skeleton lies at the bottom, 20 feet below, impaled on wooden spikes.

There is nothing of value in the pit, and even the skeleton's rags have long disappeared.

Traps (EL 2 each): The real traps are on either side of the open pit, just off of the trail. Unlike the pit on the trail, these 20-foot deep pits are concealed with turf and brush stacked on a covering of stout, woven reed mats.

Spiked Pit Trap: CR: 2; no attack roll necessary (2d6), +10 melee (1d4 spikes for 1d4+2 points of damage per successful hit); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

W2. Bridge of Bones.

> The path ends at a bridge made entirely of bones that spans 40 feet of the murky water, connecting the soggy land to an island surrounded by thick briar hedges. Muddy tracks cover the horrid bridge of gnawed and yellowed bones. The old skulls that serve as post markers along the bridge's length seem to challenge anyone who might consider leaving their own tracks on the foul structure.

Although the creepy bridge groans and creeks, and bits of bone might flake off as characters walk across it, the bridge is sturdy. Portions of the bridge are composed of animated skeletons.

Creatures (EL 4): A dozen partial skeletons guard the bridge from intrusion by any humanoid not in the company of Sertha.

Skeletons (12): hp 6 each; *Monster Manual* 165.

Tactics: Six skeletons line each side of the bridge, serving as post markers. They will not attack until an intruder has reached the midpoint of the bridge. At that time, all the skeletons attack anyone they can reach with their claws. The skeletons have no way of leaving their positions. When a skeleton is destroyed, the integrity of the bridge is jeopardized. For each one destroyed, there is a 5% cumulative chance the bridge will collapse. Skeletons turned and destroyed by a cleric increase this cumulative chance to 10%. The falling bridge will dump any characters into the moat below (where they will likely be attacked by the Creatures there). Characters within 5 feet of either shore can jump to (relatively) dry land by making a successful Jump check. If the bridge collapses, the skeletons are effectively out of combat, even if all of them were not destroyed by the event that destroyed the bridge.

W3. The Moat. Sertha's island is surrounded by a natural moat. Although the water is only 3 feet deep, the mud at the bottom is exceptionally thick, halving a character's speed. Creatures also guard the moat.

Creatures (EL 3): Zombies, buried in the mud under the bridge, wait for any creature to come within 10 feet before they attack. They can be discovered with a *detect undead* spell or by actively making a Spot check (DC 15). Characters need to specifically state that they are looking under the bridge to receive this Spot check. They cannot reach characters on the bridge and will not attack them.

Human Zombies (6): hp 16 each; *Monster Manual* 191.

Tactics: The zombies rise to attack any creature passing within 10 feet. As the zombies are slow, they do not have a chance to surprise characters coming near them. Characters

who happen to fall or jump from the bridge onto the zombies are caught flatfooted unless they are already aware of them. These undead creatures only attack characters in the moat.

W4. Outer Yard.

The enclosed yard has a beaten down path along the perimeter of the hedges and two visible exits, one leading to the bridge and another barred by a gate made of bones and skulls. The yard's only landmark is a tangled mass of briars near its center.

Casual investigation of this area reveals tracks matching the ones found on the bridge. A Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) indicates that wolves must either live in the area or at least frequent it often. Wolves have left tracks along the path and piles of manure here and there, and none of these signs are more than a few days old. A Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) reveals a slight path toward the gate; its traffic consists mainly of humanoids and herd animals.

Creatures (EL 4): Two worgs wait under the brambles in the yard's center. Due to thick concealment of the briars, they receive a +4 circumstance bonus to their Hide checks.

Worgs (2): hp 35, 28; *Monster Manual* 184.

Tactics: The worgs attempt to attack unwary characters, preferring to catch them between the briar patch and one of the interior hedge walls and hoping to cut off the characters' escape route. They pursue fleeing victims if no combative targets remain. The pair disengages from a party that reduces them to 50% of their total hit points, but they do not leave the yard unless the PCs press an attack against them. If the PCs detect the worgs before they spring their ambush, the evil wolves attack immediately.

Treasure: Investigating the worgs' lair reveals scattered bones, one of which has a plain gold bracelet (100 gp) attached.

W5. Inner Yard. The inner yard serves as a pen for the assorted animals (2d4 pigs, 1d6+1 cows, and 2d8 chickens) Sertha has stolen and raised. Ugdnir, an ogre shepherd, watches over them. The bored ogre is anxious for a little excitement.

Creature (EL 2): Ugdnir is normally found near his lean-to, thinking about how much he would like to escape Sertha. Should the PCs encounter the worgs before encountering Ugdnir, he will be found watching the combat between the two groups from behind the inner yard's gate a few rounds after the growling and biting begins.

Ugdnir, Ogre: hp 30; *Monster Manual* 144.

Tactics: Ugdnir will not venture into the outer yard, but he attacks the PCs if they enter the inner yard. If reduced to 5 hit points or fewer, Ugdnir parleys with the PCs. If ignored, he assumes the PCs are going fight to the death and does the same.

Should the PCs interrogate Ugdnir, they discover that he knows very little about Sertha. They do learn he fears the hag and that he is convinced she is often nearby, invisible and watching him, trying to listen to his rebellious thoughts. He knows she brought two ragged humans to the island recently.

Treasure: Under Ugdnir's straw bedding is a sack containing bone dice, a chunk of amber (250 gp), four moonstones (50 gp each), and 100 sp.

W6. Witch's Lair. Sertha is normally encountered in her private section of the island. If the PCs have encountered the worgs previous to this encounter, please read or paraphrase the following text:

> A modest peasant hut, its entrance dark and forbidding, waits in the western corner. A smoking clay oven, not far from the hut, seems to be the source of delicious-smelling bread. Beside the oven rests a large, sooty cauldron supported by a thick, wooden tripod. Wooden bars cover a pit near the eastern briar wall.

If Sertha has no warning of the PCs intrusion (that is, they managed to avoid making a great deal of noise in areas **W4** and **W5**), modify the boxed text above by adding this section:

> A bent, old woman putters about the yard. Her hair appears to be a wild tangle of dried weeds, while her wrinkled skin shows a putrid green tone under its thin, white pallor. Her fingers end in claws that could strip bark from a tree or tear flesh from a man.

If the PCs investigate the area, they discover Sertha's footprints with a successful Search check (DC 10). The clay oven contains some tasty loaves of bread, but the old cauldron is empty and cold.

The barred pit contains the missing refugee villagers, Dmitri and Vladimir. The pit is only 6 feet deep, and the prisoners can escape once the ropes securing the wooden grill to sunken stakes are untied or cut.

Dmitri and Vladimir (male human Com1; Handle Animal +2) have been fed well by the hag, and even though they are scared of her, they love her thick loaves of bread and roasted pork. The ogre shepherd is the only other island inhabitant they are aware of.

Creature (EL 5): Sertha is cooking when the characters arrive. If she has had any kind of warning, she uses her *invisibility* and pass without trace abilities to conceal her presence. She waits by her hut for the PCs, looking for a chance to ambush them. She would like to trap them in her hut if she can. If she cannot attack from ambush, so be it. Sertha does not wait for the PCs to wear her down with missiles or spells.

Sertha, Green Hag: hp 45; *Monster Manual* 115.

Possessions: Pouch containing a potion of *cure moderate wounds.*

Tactics: Sertha likes to use her weakness power on an enemy first, but if the target succeeds at making its Fortitude save (DC 13) the first time, she goes straight to ripping and tearing with her claws. Should the victim fail its first save, she tries another weakness touch attack, hoping to reduce her opponent to 0 Strength; helpless victims are particularly amusing to Sertha.

Development: Regardless of the PCs' actions, Sertha attacks them before they leave her lair. If she is reduced to 30% of her hit points, she attempts to evade the characters using her *invisibility* power. Once she is certain the party has put some distance between themselves and her, she attempts to follow them back to their camp. She does her best to learn as much about the heroes as she can, putting her Listen skill to good use while avoiding contact with the PCs or anyone else. Soon afterward, she begins scheming her revenge . . . .

W7. The Hut.

> The hut's one room is a smelly mess, thick with the odor of leaves that have rotted under the stagnant pools of the swamp. A thick board supported by two barrels of uneven height serves as a table in the center of the dwelling. Assorted crockery, lumpy sacks, and kindling are pressed against the walls, covered in dust and cobwebs. The dirt floor is lightly covered in straw.

The crockery contains assorted dried herbs and plants, and the lumpy sacks contain grain. Spiders and assorted harmless vermin make their homes in every crevice and dark space they can find.

Treasure: Hidden in one of the table barrels is a golden grivna (Eastern torc worth 500 gp), an ivory comb decorated with silver dragons (200 gp), a silver bracelet (100 gp), ten amber pieces (100 gp each), a *potion of charisma,* and a *potion of bull's strength.*

Sarbas

The trading settlement of Sarbas is briefly described below. You will find enough detail to run the last chapter of this adventure as well as a good starting point for developing future intrigues in this sordid, violent town.

Sarbas (small town): Nonstandard; AL N; 800-gp limit; Assets 40,000 gp; Population 1,000; humans only.

Authority Figures: Spytihnev, male human Ftr7, Prince (Khagan) of Sarbas; Blud, male human Ftr8, the Khagan's Deputy (Beg).

Important Characters: Uncle Khuritsa, male human Exp3 (merchant); Rogvolod, male human Ari2/War1 (noble); Mojmir, male human War3/Exp1 (merchant); Edeco, male human Exp4/War2 (merchant); Kaloyan, male human Ftr4/Ari2 (noble); Sigurd, male human Bbn4 (berserker duelist); Drozd, male human Clr4 (chief shaman).

Others: Khagan's Guard, Ftr5, Ftr3, Ftr2 (3), Ftr1 (6), War1 (20); Town Militia, War6, War3 (2), War1 (47); Bodyguards and Mercenaries, Ftr4 (2), Ftr2 (4), Ftr1 (8), Bbn2 (2), Bbn1 (4), War2 (4), War1 (50); Brd4, Brd2 (2), Brd1 (4); Clr2 (2), Clr1 (4); Rgr2, Rgr1 (2); Rog8, Rog6, Rog4 (2), Rog2 (4), Rog1 (8); Sor2; Exp9, Exp5, Exp4 (2), Exp2 (4), Exp1 (28); Ari1 (4); Adp4, Adp2 (2), Adp1 (4); Com2, Com1 (846).

Notes: The number of characters representing the fighting classes is a little higher than normal in Sarbas. This is due to the historical societal conditions of Dark Age Russia; adventurers, warrior merchants, and ruffians flocked to the trading settlements, seeking riches.

Town Militia: Only a dozen warriors serve full-time; the rest serve when needed, pulled from the town's collection of tradesmen and laborers. The militia is controlled by the Beg (who is also the commander of the Khagan's bodyguard).

Bodyguards and Mercenaries: These professionals comprise the fighting class NPCs employed and seeking employment in Sarbas.

Nonstandard Government: Khagan Spytihnev rules a collective of nobles and wealthy merchants. His authority is by no means absolute, but he is not simply a "first among equals." It must still be remembered that the noble and the rich are quite independent in their pursuits, and some of them control Sarbas as much as the prince. Blud, the Khagan's deputy, is

probably the most powerful man in Sarbas. He directly controls the largest number of armed men in the town and will not hesitate to use them if any of the elite warrior merchant families attempts to usurp the Khagan. Sigurd, the berserk duelist, is a dangerous tool used by the noble families of Sarbas. When a dispute cannot be settled by the Khagan's advice, Sigurd is hired to settle matters that have been approved for legal trials by combat.

Law and Order: The laws in place are only meant to curb violence, not punish it. This is mostly accomplished by providing fines for murders, although vendettas are common even if the lawful fines are paid to a victim's family. The deputy and town militia do not stop small skirmishes, as that is "family business." On the other hand, thieves are often hanged.

Population: The population temporarily swells in the late summer, as nomad horse and cattle traders fill the town. For a month or so, Sarbas has double its normal population.

History: The settlement began as an outpost for the diminishing Khazar Empire based in the Caspian. During the late 9th and early 10th centuries, Scandinavian warlords ruled Sarbas on behalf of the Khazars, gathering tribute on their paymasters' behalf. As Khazarian influence dwindled in the face of the rise of the Pechenegs on the steppes, Sarbas became independent. It retains its Khazarian name though, and serves as home for many Asiatic nobles, mercenaries, and merchants.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PC's arrive in Sarbas:

> Hanged criminals greet all who come to Sarbas. The bodies of those who coveted the possessions of others in life can now be seen dangling by their necks from trees near the edge of town. Beyond the corpses' gently swaying feet, a collection of huts, timber longhouses, and small forts lie crowded between the Witch Fens and the Dnieper and Chernak rivers. Numerous ships line the shores of the town, their owners using them to transport furs, honey wax, and slaves from as far away as Novgorod. Chatter fills the air like the mud, manure, and people fill the streets, and the voices of Slavs mix with Swedes, Bulgars, Greeks, Germans, and Arabs.

At Predeslava's urging, the group should head to her uncle's property as soon as they arrive. Read or paraphrase the following when the PC's arrive at the compound belonging to Predeslava's uncle:

> Directions to Khuritsa's manor were easily gained, and the walled compound is easily found. Its two-story hall sets it apart from most of the nearby dwellings, even the nicer ones made of wood. A palisade, not much taller than a man, surrounds the manor, allowing privacy if not a tremendous amount of protection.

Creature (EL –): Once Predeslava announces her arrival to the bored sentry looking through a crack in the gate, Unlce Khuritsa and his household warmly welcomes the PCs and refugees. Uncle Khuritsa is a fabulous host, even purchasing tents for the refugees who cannot fit under his roof at night. It is quite evident he is one of Sarbas's elite. He loves to swap stories of heroic exploits, telling the PCs of the good old days when he used to make the journey every year to Constantinople, "the greatest city in all the world."

Uncle Khuritsa, Male Human Exp3: CR –; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft); HD 3d6; hp 14; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +3 melee (1d8/crit 19-20, longsword), +2 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger), or +2 ranged (1d4/crit 19-20,

dagger); AL NG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +6, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +7, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (Geography) +5, Profession (Merchant) +6, Profession (Sailor) +6, Sense Motive +7. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword), Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Longsword, dagger with silver hilt and garnet in pommel (500 gp), golden grivna (800 gp), two silver hack bracelets (200 gp each), and a pouch containing 100 sp.

Event 6. Vendetta. The party has reached a sanctuary where they can rest, heal, and make plans. Predeslava plans to stay in Sarbas with her uncle until her brother sends for her. The peaceful stay will abruptly change in about two weeks with the arrival of Viseslav and the captives from Ovotsk. Read or paraphrase the following text at that time:

Olni, Khuritsa's young footman, rushes into the manor, out of breath, his eyes large and his face pale. He announces that Viseslav and his retinue are in the market square right now, looking to sell several dozen slaves.

Predeslava turns to her small warband and asks, "Will you honor Igor and fulfill the blood debt owed him? Will you take pity on the people we failed to protect?"

If the PCs do not seem eager to combat Viseslav, Predeslava argues that it will be much easier to fight Viseslav in the market than it would be on any battlefield, as most of his men are probably scattered around the town and will not be able to help their chieftain until it is too late.

Uncle Khuritsa has a small bodyguard, less than a dozen men, but he is willing to have them back up the PCs if they agree to fight Viseslav. His men could prevent any of Viseslav's stray men from coming to their leader's assistance once the fighting begins. Uncle Khuritsa also appeals to the PCs sense of pride and honor, reminding them that if they defeated Helgi the White, they should not fear Viseslav.

If the PCs refuse to fight Viseslav, Predeslava releases them from service and Uncle Khuritsa tells them to never show their cowardly faces in his hall again. The PCs' reputation for cowardice will spread within the day, and they will suddenly find that merchants no longer carry the goods they require, and inns are suddenly filled to capacity as the people of Sarbas rally around one of their citizens.

If the PCs agree to battle Viseslav in the market square, read or paraphrase the following text:

The market is noisy and crowded, and the smell of dirty humans and animals mingles with the luxurious scents of spices and perfumes. Great and small collections of cattle, horses, and slaves are inspected, haggled over, and sold. Just like the animals, the faces of the human captives show little interest in their future owners.

Khuritsa's footman subtly nods his head toward a large warrior with dark red hair whose beard is streaked with gray. He is laughing and talking with a young nobleman, judging from the silver grivna about the man's neck and the gold cloak pin on his unblemished dark green cloak.

Bored guards mill about the pair, watching each other and the surrounding traffic with little interest. Small chests and sacks sit between the men. Three dozen or more prisoners wait nearby, with ropes binding their hands and tethered together to form a long, sad chain.

The footman whispers, "The older red beard is Viseslav. The young man is Liut, Rogvolod's son. Be careful with the boy. His father has much influence." Khuritsa's armed men have already woven themselves into the market's activity, making a very loose circle about Viseslav and Liut. The trap is set.

Viseslav and Liut have just concluded a lucrative deal and are making small talk. As long as the PCs do not blatantly approach with weapons drawn, they have a chance to surprise those they wish to attack, subject to Sense Motive checks for anyone but Liut (he relies on his guards for that). It is also possible the PCs might just call out a challenge, which Viseslav and his men will readily accept. Keep in mind that murders and vendettas are common, and although not every day at the market ends with a bloody showdown, it is not unheard of (and has a high entertainment value to anyone not directly involved in the conflict).

Creatures (EL 7): Listed below are Viseslav, Liut, and their guards. A successful resolution to this encounter does not necessarily mean the PCs have to defeat Liut and his men in combat, but the PCs will need to take the slaves from them to satisfy Predeslava and her honor. It does not matter whether the captives are freed by diplomacy, purchase, threat, theft, or violence.

Viseslav, Male Human Ftr5/Ari1: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 4 in.); HD 5d10+15 (includes Toughness feat); hp 50; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 chainmail, +2 shield); Atk +10 melee (1d8+6/crit 19-20, *+1 longsword*), +8 melee (1d8+3/crit ×3, battleaxe), or +5 ranged (1d8+3/crit ×3, shortspear); AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +4, Bluff +6, Craft (armorer) +6, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Ride +6, Sense Motive +4, Swim -7*. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

*Includes the -1 penalty to Swim checks per 5 pounds of gear carried.

Possessions: Chainmail, large wooden shield, *+1 longsword* (Rolf's Bane, see below), battleaxe, two shortspears, amber bead necklace (700 gp), gold cloakpin with garnet (200 gp), gold bracelet (100 gp), pouch containing 300 sp and 10 gp.

† **Rolf's Bane:** This weapon is a magic sword of minor fame, its name taken from a slain enemy of one of Viseslav's ancestors. The sword was allegedly forged and empowered with magic by a dwarf named Svali (whose name is etched in silver runes on the blade, near the hilt). A bardic knowledge check (DC 25) reveals this information, and possibly more, depending on what details you care to add to the sword's history for the purposes of your own campaign.

Viseslav's Guards, Male Human War1 (4): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft.); HD 1d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 11 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+4 chain shirt, +2 shield); Atk +2 melee (1d8/crit ×3, battleaxe), or +1 ranged (1d6, javelin); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Con 11, Dex 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

ENCOUNTER LEVEL CHART

Summarized below are the Encounter Levels (EL) for all the encounters in "Rivers of Blood." Encounters are categorized by events and location.

Event	Encounter Description	EL
2	Light Horsemen, Male Human War1 (6)	5
2	Light Horsemen, Male Human War1 (6)	5
2	Mundiak, Male Human Ftr3 with Light Horsemen, War1 (6)	6
3	Helgi the White, Male Human Ftr4 with Noble Warriors, Male Human War1 (4) and Boian, Male Human Rog2/Ftr1	6+
4	Tribal Warriors, Male Human War1 (9)	4
6	Viseslav, Male Human Ftr5/Ari1 with Guards, Male Human War1 (4) and Liut, Male Human Ari2 and Guards, Male Human War1 (4)	7

Haunted Wood Random Encounters

	Brown Bear	4
	Wolves (6)	4
	Hunters, Male Human War1 (9)	4
	Shadow	3

Haunted Wood/Chernak River

Area	Encounter Description	EL
R1	Trap (River Rapids)	4
R2	Orimir, Male Ogre Sor4	6
R3	Large Water Elemental	5

Witch Fens

Area	Encounter Description	EL
W1	Trap (Spiked Pit)	2
	Trap (Spiked Pit)	2
W2	Human Skeletons (12)	4
W3	Human Zombies (6)	3
W4	Worgs (2)	4
W5	Ugdnir, Male Ogre	2
W6	Sertha, Green Hag	5

Skills: Intimidate +4, Profession (sailor) +2, Swim +4. *Feats:* Toughness, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Possessions: Chain shirt, large wooden shield, battleaxe, two javelins, hack silver bracelet (1d20×10 gp), bronze grivna (Eastern torc worth 50 gp), pouch containing 10 gp and 60 sp.

Liut, Human Male, Ari2: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft); HD 2d8; hp 12; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +2 melee (1d8/crit 19-20, longsword); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Skills: Appraise +5, Bluff +5, Innuendo +4, Intimidate +7, Ride +5. *Feats:* Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Longsword, silver grivna (Eastern torc worth 300 gp), gold cloakpin (200 gp), pouch containing 200 sp and 20 gp.

Liut's Guards, Male Human War1 (4): CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft.); HD 1d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 11 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+4 chain shirt, +2 shield); Atk +2 melee (1d8/crit ×3, battleaxe) or +1 ranged (1d6, javelin); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Con 11, Dex 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Intimidate +4, Profession (sailor) +4, Swim -6*. *Feats:* Toughness, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

*Includes the -1 penalty to Swim checks per 5 pounds of gear carried.

Possessions: Chain shirt, large wooden shield, battleaxe, three javelins, hack silver bracelet (1d20×10 gp), pouch containing 100 sp.

Tactics: Viseslav and his guards make a stand against any attackers. His guards are supposed to protect their chieftain, but he is not afraid of wading into combat. Viseslav makes plenty of references to Rolf's Bane and his fighting prowess during combat. The chieftain and his guards do not surrender but do not pursue fleeing enemies to the edge of the market (Viseslav fears an ambush).

If violence suddenly erupts, Liut's men join the fight against the PCs. If the PCs can convince Liut and his guards that they are interested only in Viseslav, they will back away from the fight. A successful Diplomacy or Intimidate check (DC 25) is sufficient to accomplish this, although if Liut or one of his guards is attacked by a PC, all bets are off. The PCs are awarded full experience for overcoming Liut and his guards if they defeat them in combat or if they get them to agree to some kind of truce.

Liut is intent on keeping the newly bought slaves. If the PCs demand the return of the captives, Liut explains that he paid for them with goods totaling 1,000 gp in value, and that he can make 4,000 gp when he sells them in Constantinople. Liut willingly parts with the slaves if offered 3,000 gp or if he loses an opposed Diplomacy check. If the PCs make a successful Intimidate check (opposed by Liut's Sense Motive check), he will accept 2,000 gp. Liut and his men otherwise attempt to stop the PCs from freeing the captives. The best solution is for the PCs to defer to Khuritsa, who can afford to bargain with Liut. Olni quickly reminds the PCs of this option should negotiations occur after combat with Viseslav.

Treasure: The sacks and small chests all belong to Viseslav. Some of the items are payment he received for the slaves, but most of the treasures are goods he has either bartered for or things he plans to sell or trade away. The PCs find the following if they search the piles and stacks: a silver chalice set with amethysts (1,000 gp), silk cloak with gold thread trim (700 gp), silver chain and pendant with amber (600 gp), small Byzantine tapestry of saints (300 gp), letter of credit (200 gp) payable by one Kelvar of Kiev, hack silver bracelet (150 gp), 10 blue quartz (10 gp each), and 50 glass beads (2 gp each).

Development: The PCs could earn a longstanding enemy with the pompous Liut if they do not treat him with respect. They also earn his enmity if they attempt to take the prisoners and just walk away without even attempting to negotiate for their release or sale. If Liut is injured or killed by the PCs, they can expect to be called in front of the khagan and a small assembly of nobles to address the legal issues of the young man's death. A hearing will involve arguments regarding the fault of the PCs and probably end in a fine of not less than 1,000 gp or a trial by combat between one PC and Sigurd, the berserk duelist (see "Sarbas's Important Characters" in the city stat block above).

Concluding the Adventure

Once Viseslav is removed as a threat to Predeslava (the PCs need not kill him to do this, but he would need to be somehow captured and controlled) and the captives are freed, the adventure is over. Everyone will know about the daring heroes who faced down a powerful warlord in the market. When Ottakar arrives in the fall to take Predeslava home, he offers them his heartfelt thanks and a signed letter of credit (500 gp) that will be honored in any major Rus settlement between the Baltic and the Black Sea.

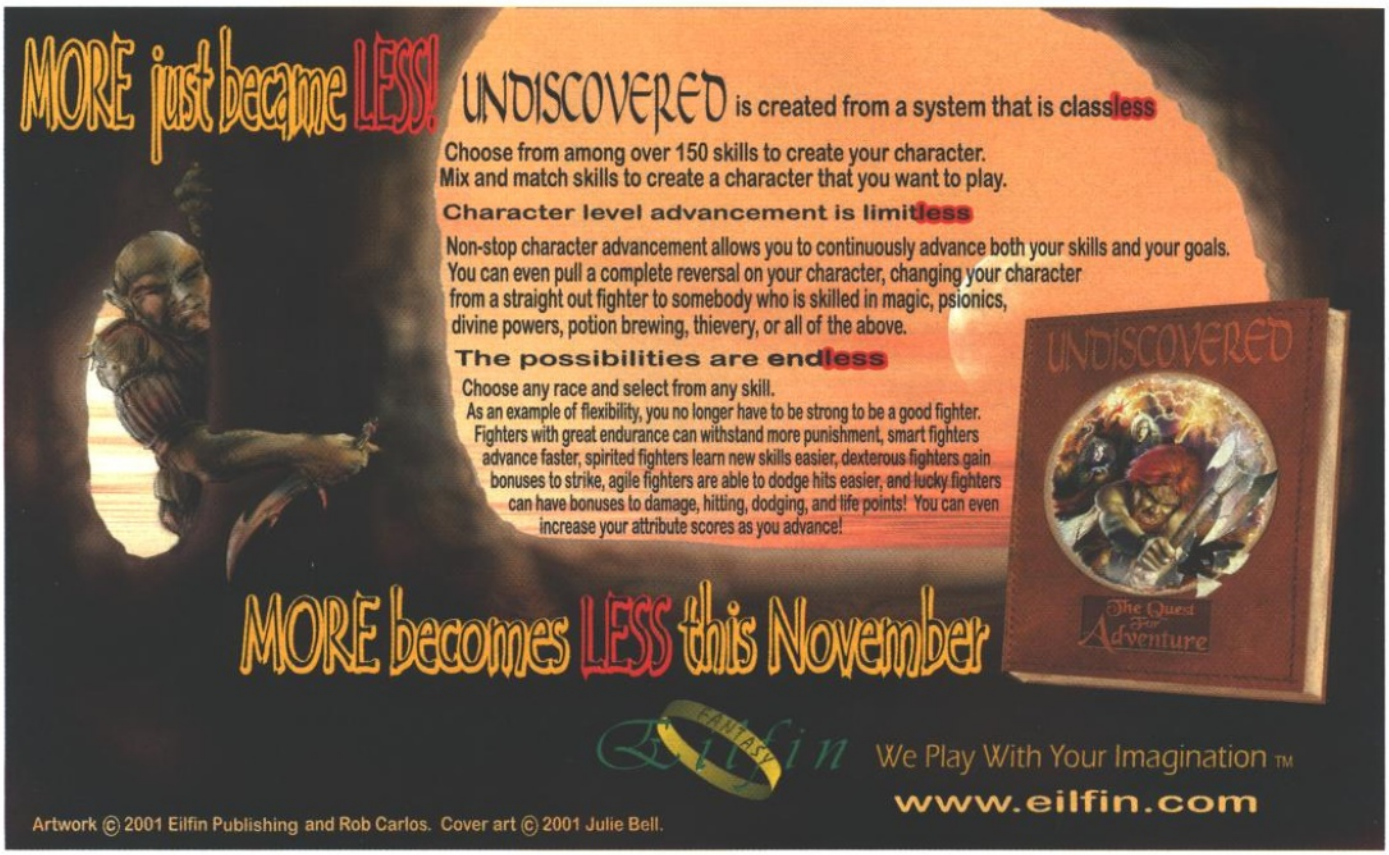
If the encounter with Liut went badly, an ongoing conflict arises between Khuritsa and Rogvolod, even if a legal resolution is required for any unfortunate deaths (see the "Development" section above). This low intensity conflict could serve as a backdrop to other adventures in Sarbas or become an impetus for an adventure itself. In addition, the PCs earn a new enemy in Rogvolod, who has considerable resources at his fingertips to make life difficult for upstart heroes who attack his children.

The PCs should find Sarbas a good place for all sorts of future adventures, even if they do not continue serving Predeslava or her family directly. Khuritsa is a good source of information and sanctuary for the PCs. Other than Khuritsa and his kin, the PCs might be sought out by any number of nobles and merchants needing their services after their success against Viseslav.

Specific adventure hooks include:

- The PCs might take advantage of the power vacuum created by the nasty vendetta between Viseslav and Predeslava. If they can repel the lawless Pecheneg bandits in the region, they might set up their own little fiefdom. It remains to be seen whether any of Viseslav's men are strong enough to take their lord's place.
- Kin of Helgi the White or other warriors slain in the siege on Ovotsk take umbrage against the PCs for siding with a woman over their mighty kinsman. Blood oaths are sworn to claim vengeance against the characters, and the PCs must constantly be on the lookout for would-be assassins.
- The rest of Sertha's coven, the green hag Abaava and the annis Volkul, decide to take revenge upon the audacious humans who dared take the life of their sister. They could cause trouble by capturing fishermen who work near the border of the fens or other travelers on the road to Sardas, having an impact on commerce in the community and its environs. They might also develop an interest in the yearly livestock drive into Sardas and use the opportunity it affords to supplement their own herds, making forays onto the road to town to capture more of the tasty animals.
- If the PCs attacked or killed Orimir the ogre or the River Goddess's water elemental minion, they might have incurred the wrath of clergy of the goddess. If this is the case, they might start finding trouble of a deadly sort any time they set foot in a boat or a coastal town. Ω

Paul says, "I share my love of history and gaming with my wife and friends, and I dedicate this adventure to them and the paper heroes and tabletop warlords they bring to life. Special thanks to Dave Gross who nudged me to write this adventure."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Headless

What Have You Got to Lose?

by James Jacobs

artwork by William O'Connor • cartography by Christopher West

"Headless" is a D&D adventure designed for four 12th-level characters. Due to the large number of undead enemies the heroes will face, clerics will be especially helpful in this adventure. Spellcasters (divine or arcane) with access to Divination spells; characters with several ranks in various Knowledge skills, Gather Information, or Scry; or bards will be of great help as well during the research phase of this adventure. Nevertheless, this adventure is suitable for any mix of races and classes and can be easily adapted for characters of levels 9–15, as noted in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar.

Characters who complete this adventure should earn enough experience points to reach 13th level. Although the module is set in the Crystalmist Mountains, it can just as easily be set in any large mountainous area somewhere above the snowline. Likewise, although the adventure begins in the beleaguered March of Sterich, transplanting it to another nation or another world entirely should be simple, provided the new locale features a troubled nation situated near a large mountain range.

Finally, make sure to study Eldrua's statistics and spells; she is an intelligent spellcaster with many resources available. Several tactics for her are suggested, but others not mentioned will doubtless come into play as you run the adventure. Try to play her as your players run their own characters.

Magic Items Monsters Non-Player Characters (NPCs) Objects Settlements Traps

Adventure Background

The derro loremaster Eldrua has been a worshiper of the foul Demon Prince of Undead, Orcus, since her childhood deep in the Underdark. As she grew older and more powerful, Orcus rewarded her skill and accomplishments in his name with dangerous Abyssal secrets and powerful magic items. Before long, she had deposed the leaders of her tribe and converted all of its members to the worship of Orcus. For some time, Eldrua was content to rule her tribe, but not long after she received a singular vision from her deity. In this vision, she saw a powerful tribe of frost giants worshiping their gods before a steaming pit of darkness in a vast cavern. Eldrua understood that this pit constituted an ancient gateway to the Abyss and knew that if she could wrest control of this pit from the giants, Orcus would greatly reward her.

So when the giants marched on the human lands of Geoff and Sterich only a month later, Eldrua seized her chance. While the giants were focused elsewhere, Eldrua and her derro kin, supplemented by several demons and undead horrors, invaded the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak. The giants were taken by surprise and Eldrua's forces took the fortress and slew the jarl. Those giants who survived fled into the surrounding mountains, vowing to someday take back their home. In the next several weeks their efforts against the human lands of Geoff and Sterich turned sour. The surviving giants scattered by Eldrua's raid were forced to cut their losses and retreat even deeper into the mountains for safety, where they soon fell victim to other frost giants who despised the kindred of Gnorgrak as worshipers of demons despicable even to them.

To reward her servitude in gaining control of the Abyssal gate-pit, Orcus sent a powerful tool to Eldrua: a potent magic weapon called the *Scythe of Orcus*. With this reward came a second vision. In this vision, Eldrua saw a complex stone and metal lattice built over the Abyssal pit, and impaled on the countless barbs of this lattice were hundreds of heads harvested from the most charismatic of the crop, their jaws open in silent, eternal screams and their eyes filled with horror. As she watched, she could see the souls of these heads funneled down into the pit and directly to the realm of Orcus, where the Demon Prince gorged on them and grew horribly powerful. When Eldrua recovered from this vision, she quickly realized that Orcus had bestowed on her the forgotten knowledge of how to construct this lattice of stone, metal, and flesh. It was known as a *Deadgate*, and when constructed would act as a soul siphon from this world into the Abyss, transmitting the spirits of those who died within hundreds of miles of the *Deadgate* directly to Orcus himself.

Eldrua wasted no time in beginning construction of the *Deadgate*. Some of her fellow derro soon found out about her plans and attempted to stop her; even for derro the horror of

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Although set in Greyhawk, this adventure should prove relatively easy to adapt to any other campaign setting. Sterich could be any frontier nation with a troubled government, as long as it is located near a mountainous area where the Hold of Gnorgrak could be hidden.

This adventure is designed to provide a challenge for a party of four 12th-level characters. If your particular party consists of characters of lower or higher level (or more or less members), you need to alter most of the encounters as well. One easy way to lower or raise the difficulty of an encounter is to adjust the character level of the opponents. If your group consists of lower-level characters, simply lower the class levels of the enemies in this adventure by the same number (to a minimum of 1). This isn't a perfect fix, however. For example, if you lower Eldrua's level, she loses the ability to cast *simulacrum*. You can cover this by reasoning she created her simulacra by using scrolls, or you can replace the simulacra with weaker versions of the real thing. The Four Hunters would become derro wizards loyal to Eldrua, for example. You should replace the white dragon simulacra with a pair of young adult white dragons Eldrua befriended. The Gnorgrak simulacra could become other derro minions specialized in the school of Illusion.

Raising class levels to match characters who are higher than 12th level is a simpler process. You can even raise the challenge level of non-classed encounters an appropriate amount by giving the creatures class levels. Drusalakas the death slaad, for example, could gain several levels of rogue, granting him some dangerous sneak attack damage and an even better Hide check.

Certain encounters in this adventure are especially deadly. If your group is lower than the recommended level, you might consider making the following changes to the adventure:

- Lower the number of Eldrua simulacra to three or two; these villains are quite deadly when they work together. Alternately, you can make the nightmares into fiendish hippogriffs; this removes their ability to become ethereal and makes the mounts much less dangerous.
- Replace the white dragon simulacra with a pair of frost worm simulacra; this results in about a 55% reduction to hit points and skill points before ability score modifiers are applied. Thus, the CR for such monsters is one to two less than normal.
- Replace Drusalakas with a less powerful slaad.
- Eliminate some of the additional opponents from the final encounter, or eliminate the *Scythe of Orcus's* ability to gate in undead.

A good way to increase the challenge of the encounters is to simply add more. Perhaps Eldrua has charged a hezrou or a glabrezu with guarding area 9. Maybe she's conjured a squad of bebilith and set them to patrol the halls of the Hold. Orcus is the Prince of Undead; he might send a high-level vampire or lich to assist Eldrua. Perhaps she even figured out a way to raise the spirit of the old white dragon as a ghost under her control.

the *Deadgate* was too much. Eldrua slew the dissenters and allies alike, and the heads of those deemed worthy were the first to grace the spires of the *Deadgate*. The others became undead minions. The derro loremaster turned to her undead creations for aid, supplementing them with simulacra and other constructs who would obey her commands without question. In the span of a year, the *Deadgate* had neared completion. All that remained was to consecrate its spires with hundreds of severed heads. The heads of many of her doomed derro kin were a start, but Eldrua knew that she needed hundreds more before the necromantic aura of the *Deadgate* would properly activate.

She created four simulacra of herself to serve as Hunters, and armed them with less powerful but nonetheless potent replicas of her own scythe. Mounted on nightmares called from Orcus's court in the Abyss, these four simulacra began nightly raids on the outlying regions of Sterich below. Human, dwarf, goblin, and orc heads fell to the four; the specific race of the heads mattered little, as they had only to be from an intelligent and self-aware creature. As the weeks wore on, the *Deadgate* began to fill with severed heads. But with each raid, the simulacra were forced to travel farther afield. News of the four headhunting riders spread like wildfire through the foothills. Some villagers tried to erect hasty defenses against the raiders, but others simply fled against so terrible a scourge.

The *Deadgate* is now nearing completion. Before long, Eldrua will activate the necromantic artifact, and the souls of all those who die throughout Sterich and the neighboring lands shall suffer an unimaginable fate.

Adventure Synopsis

The party becomes aware of Eldrua's headhunter's raids when they receive disturbing visions from their deities. They might learn more information via Divination spells or mundane research; some of these methods alert them to the dire nature of what's really going on. Eventually, they discover that the source of this trouble is located in an ancient frost giant stronghold deep in the Crystalmist Mountains.

Infiltrating the ancient frost giant fortress is a dangerous and difficult task that becomes even more difficult if Eldrua knows of the invading heroes. Hopefully, the heroes penetrate the complex, reach the *Deadgate*, and destroy the vile Abyssal device. With Eldrua's defeat, Orcus himself manifests before the party to reclaim the *Scythe of Orcus* and to warn the group to stop meddling in his infernal affairs lest he be forced to take a personal interest in their health. Failure to destroy the *Deadgate* spells doom for the souls of all those who die in Sterich, consigning their souls to the realm of Orcus.

Beginning the Adventure

If your group of heroes is based in Sterich, getting them started on this adventure is simple. Perhaps they are called upon by their superiors to investigate strange reports of headhunting nightmare riders in the foothills of the Crystalmist Mountains. Friends or relatives of the heroes or their cohorts might have suffered these attacks, injecting a need for vengeance into the game.

If your players are not based in Sterich, you can use one or both of the following two adventure hooks to alert them to the danger building in the troubled nation:

- If the party resurrects an NPC, cohort, or one of their own, then you can have the resurrected character scream out in horror and clutch madly at his throat the instant life returns to his body. The frenzied screams continue for 1d6 rounds before the victim collapses into unconsciousness. Upon reviving, the victim has vague memories of a twisted stone and metal sculpture on which hung countless severed but horribly animated heads that called and beckoned to him. The victim became lulled by the supernatural vision and had a sensation of floating up to the heads, at which time a huge shadowy figure reared up from a steaming pit at the sculpture's core and

tried to swallow the victim whole. The victim is convinced that this really occurred, and it was only the timely intervention of the resurrection that saved him by pulling his soul back into his body. The party might be inclined to dismiss this vision, but as the days go on they hear stories of how anyone resurrected since then has the same terrible vision. These visions are caused by the expanding influence of the nearly complete *Deadgate;* particularly sensitive individuals (those with high Charisma scores) are especially vulnerable to this influence and suffer these visions despite any intervening distance between them and the *Deadgate.*

• One of the party's religious members (a cleric or paladin is best) receives a brief but powerful vision. This vision is similar to the one above, save that the character observes the scene from afar, watching helplessly as fresh souls are drawn into the lattice of severed heads to drain into the pit with cries of anguish. As the vision proceeds, the cleric's viewpoint begins to pull back and she can see thousands of souls drawn from across the Flanaess into this pit; this appears as a massive hurricane of ephemeral spirits draining into dark oblivion. A successful Knowledge (geography) check (DC 15) as the vision rises reveals that the "eye" of this spiritual hurricane seems to be centered on Sterich.

Research

With the exception of possible visions sent by a religious character's deity, the party is under no external obligation to investigate these events. Thus, the most important thing to do in this section of the adventure is to establish a sense of urgency; give them clues as to what's going on but make it obvious that to learn more and possibly stop what terrible event is about to occur, the party needs to travel to Sterich.

Once the characters realize that something terrible is going on, they have several options for further investigation open to them. Three skills in particular (Gather Information, Knowledge, and Scry) will be particularly useful in learning more about what's going on in Sterich.

GATHER INFORMATION: Using this skill to find out what's going on in Sterich won't work unless the character is located in a region near Sterich (Geoff, Bissel, the Gran March, the Duchy of Ulek, Keoland, or the Yeomanry) or in a cultural center the size of a large town (population 2,001 or more) or larger. Using this skill in a region directly bordering Sterich or in a Metropolis-sized city grants a +3 circumstance bonus to the check. Characters actually in Sterich gain a +6 circumstance bonus to the check, which can then be made in any size settlement. The results of the check are summarized below.

• **DC 15:** Sterich has had some trouble lately, what with all the con men and greedy aristocrats trying to "recover" as much new land as possible after the recent trouble with the giants and their kin. It's not a safe place to be these days.

• **DC 18:** Rumors tell that the western reaches of Sterich have begun to suffer attacks from humanoids and giants again, but the government is too involved with internal strife to even notice this threat.

• **DC 20:** The most recent giant raid took place in the village of Dunmoor.

• **DC 22:** The rumors of giants and humanoids attacking the western regions of Sterich are false. It's a cult of sadistic dwarves who worship demons.

• **DC 25:** Demon worshiping dwarves have been mounting raids on the hamlets of western Sterich, riding nightmares and wielding powerful magic scythes.

• **DC 30:** There are actually only four headhunting dwarves, but they are all powerful spellcasters and deadly warriors. They take nothing from the raids when they leave save for the severed heads of seemingly random individuals that fall to their scythes.

• **DC 35:** The four headhunters are allied with incorporeal undead and wore suits of full plate with helmets made to resemble the heads of fanged goats. Only the eyes of the attackers were visible, and these were dead white like those of a boiled fish.

KNOWLEDGE: As the characters gain more information about the situation in Sterich, certain Knowledge skills provide more clues. Note that characters can hire sages to discover this information, if need be.

The Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak: Once the characters see the fortress in which Eldrua and her minions are based (either in visions, via *scrying* or other Divination magic, or in person), they can learn more with the following Knowledge checks.

• **DC 25—Knowledge (history), Knowledge (geography), or Bardic Knowledge:** The fortress can be none other than the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak, a legendary frost giant leader from the Crystalmists who mysteriously vanished during the giant wars several years ago. His fortress was located somewhere deep in the Crystalmist Mountains.

• **DC 30—Knowledge (geography) or Bardic Knowledge:** The Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak is said to be located in a narrow valley high in the Crystalmist Mountains about two hundred miles to the west of Istivin.

• **DC 28—Knowledge (religion):** Jarl Gnorgrak and his kin were said to worship a foul demon named Kostchtchie and were consequently despised by other giants.

• **DC 20—Knowledge (the planes):** The pit under the severed heads seen in the vision is likely a portal to the Abyss.

• **DC 30—Knowledge (the planes) or Knowledge (religion):** The creature that rose from the pit in the vision sounds awfully like the Demon Prince of Undeath, Orcus.

Deadgates: Anyone who has a vision of the *Deadgate* or is asked about what it could be by someone who had a vision can make a Knowledge (arcana) or bardic knowledge check (DC 25) to realize the device is a *Deadgate.* Additional information about *Deadgates* is difficult to come by. Research done in a large library might turn up some information; a successful Gather Information check (DC 35) uncovers some useful information. A character who makes some Knowledge checks (arcana, history, the planes, or religion will all suffice) recalls the same types of information; the DC for such a check is 25, with higher rolls indicating more exact information. You should parcel out bits of information about these devices as you see fit. The most important thing is for the characters to learn that these devices were very dangerous and evil, and the possibility that a new one is being constructed is dire news indeed.

SCRY: Once the characters hear about the Four Hunters who have been attacking Sterich villages, they can attempt to scry on them. Since they will likely have only vague information, the DC for this check is 20; once they have encountered the Hunters, it drops to 10. What the seer sees depends on the time of day; during the day, the Four Hunters are stationed deep in the Hold, guarding the throne room. There is a 5% chance that the Hunter being *scryed* on is actually in the

Temple near the *Deadgate* (area 13) speaking with Eldrua. During the night, the Four Hunters are guarding the courtyard. Scrying on them at this time allows the viewer to observe the exterior of the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak.

Remember to check to see whether the person being *scryed* upon notices the scrying attempt; if they do, the Hunters and Eldrua begin to use *nondetection* spells to block further scrying.

USING MAGIC: Divination magic can aid the characters greatly in their attempts to figure out what's going on in Sterich. Specific information that can be learned with divination magic is detailed below.

Augury, Divination: Raiding the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak is a dangerous undertaking, but one that must be done soon if Eldrua's and Orcus's plans are to be stopped. A typical *divination* result to a question like, "How will we fare if we invade the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak?" would result in a mixed answer, one that would encourage the group to go ahead with the plan but to expect heavy losses. Note that *augury* can only predict events that will occur in the immediate future and might not be of much use to the party early in this adventure.

Commune: This spell can be very useful. Based on the questions the caster asks, this spell can be used to provide information to focus the party's goals. Any of the information that can be gained from other spells or skills discussed in this section can be learned with this spell if the caster just asks the correct set of questions. In any case, once the caster completes his questions, his deity gives him a bit of free advice, impressing on the caster the need for haste in resolving this matter. The caster realizes that there is little more than a week left before events pass beyond the point of no return. Also, remember that most deities find *Deadgates* reprehensible and foul, and as a result answers to these questions should be direct and fairly clear.

Contact Other Plane: This spell should be handled similarly to *commune*. A result of "lie" indicates that the power contacted is an ally of Orcus (or possibly even Orcus himself); such an entity does all it can to lead the caster astray with false information.

Discern Location: This spell can be used to learn the exact location of the Four Hunters. In general, the spell indicates they are located in the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak in the Crystalmist Mountains.

Find the Path: Once the party discovers the name of the frost giant fortress in which Eldrua is based, this spell provides an excellent way for them to determine its location.

Legend Lore, Vision: These spells can be used to divine much of the information given in the previous section about *Deadgates* or the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak.

Speak with Dead: Remember that this spell requires the targeted corpse to have a mouth; headless bodies tell no tales.

Adventure Notes

Here are several factors to keep in mind during the adventure:

Time Limit: Eldrua is almost done outfitting the *Deadgate* with severed heads. The final raid on Dunmoor by the Four Hunters should provide her with enough heads to complete the construction of the *Deadgate*, after which she needs only to perform some lengthy rituals and attach the final heads before the artifact activates and begins to send souls to Orcus. Eldrua needs one complete, uninterrupted week to finish.

Simulacra: Several of the enemies in this adventure are simulacra. These simulacra have their own pseudo-personalities (although the personalities of simulacra made from the same source are more or less identical to each other), but they remain at all times under the command of Eldrua. A *true seeing* spell reveals them as they actually appear: animated creatures made of snow and ice. A savvy spellcaster who specifically studies a simulacrum with the hunch that all is not as it seems can make a Spot check (DC 12) to notice something suspicious; a successful Spellcraft check (DC 27) at this point reveals the truth. A successful *dispel magic, greater dispelling,* or *Mordenkainen's disjunction* spell can instantly destroy a simulacrum if it overcomes the caster level (in this case, 13th level).

Eldrua's Intelligence: Eldrua is quite intelligent, so play her as such. If the heroes attempt to scry on her, check to see whether she notices; if she does, she'll start preparing *nondetection* spells and use her magic to try to determine who's spying on her. If she is able to start scrying on them in return, she'll study their strengths and weaknesses and try to adjust the defenses of her stronghold to account for them. One of her favorite tactics is to use *dream* and *nightmare* spells on victims she has *scryed*. She uses these spells to try to scare off anyone she thinks is trying to find her. If she needs help, she'll use her *contact other plane* scrolls to ask Orcus for advice. She's not afraid to bring a fight to the party; if she learns their location before they reach the Hold, she sends the Four Hunters, one of the white dragon simulacra, or some of her fiendish allies out to attack them.

Deadgate proximity: Once the characters enter the Crystalmist Mountains, they are under the influence of the dormant *Deadgate*, as detailed at the end of the adventure.

To Sterich

Sterich itself is going through some troubled times. Inquiries with government officials into the matter of the attacks on the western towns are largely ignored or filed away for future reference. No one seems to want to help the party, but no one really objects to their traveling to Dunmoor or the other western areas to do a little investigating on their own. Further information on Sterich and its current political climate can be found on pages 106-108 of the *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer* if you wish to expand this portion of the adventure. Note that if the characters do not start out in Sterich, they might need to resort to magical means of travel, such as *teleport* spells, to arrive in time to stop Eldrua's plans.

The party might be drawn to the site of the most recent attack: the hamlet of Dunmoor. When they arrive, the place is in ruins. Only a few buildings remain standing. A mass grave has been dug and filled with headless bodies. Rubble chokes the streets, and fires still smolder in burnt-out foundations. Only one building remains standing. Several more headless bodies can be found in the ruins of this building: the Sputtertap Tavern. Little can be found searching the place; the Four Hunters made off with what wealth they could find before they burned the remaining buildings and collected their last harvest.

Someone with the Track feat who searches the area for tracks has a chance to discover a clue with a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 18); in several places, the hard ground of the hamlet is scorched in strange hoof-shaped patterns, as if several horses with burning hooves had galloped through town. A second Wilderness Lore check (DC 25) notes

that the strange tracks seem to originate in the western end of the town; another set of tracks seems to leave in the same direction. These tracks simply end at the edge of town, though. There is nothing in the soft ground outside. Looking in the direction the tracks apparently came from and retreated to puts the tracker face to face with the intimidating distant vista of the Crystalmist Mountains.

Into the Crystalmists

The rest of this adventure assumes the PCs decide to track down the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak and put down the menace that the Four Hunters and the *Deadgate* present. If they decide not to, then they unknowingly fail in their mission as detailed in "Concluding the Adventure."

Reaching the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak can be a difficult task. This adventure assumes that the party learns of the Hold and its location either via research or Divination spells such as *find the path*. In any case, the fortress itself is located high in the Crystalmist Mountains, in a mountain valley about 15,000 feet above sea level. The air at this height is thin but not enough so to hamper the characters; of more concern is the cold. The average temperature at this height hovers around 10° F; unprotected characters might take subdual damage from the cold (see page 86 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

The Hold is just over 210 miles from Dunmoor. The first seventy miles of this journey are across scrublands with many trails (×1 to movement rate—see "Overland Movement" on page 143 of the *Player's Handbook*). The final 140 miles are through trackless mountains (×1/4 movement rate). Most mounts are useless in the rugged terrain encountered in these last 140 miles. The use of several castings of *find the path* allows the party to travel directly to the Hold; thus, a group of adventurers with a speed of 30 feet could walk from Dunmoor to the Hold in about twenty-six days. This is more than enough time for Eldrua to finish work on the *Deadgate*. Utilizing faster mounts or spells like *fly* drastically reduces travel time. If you wish, feel free to spice up the journey with additional encounters or events. If Eldrua has realized that the characters are on to her, she sends the Hunters to ambush them.

The Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak

The following description assumes that the party arrives at the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak during the day. If they arrive at night, darkness occludes some of the details below, and there is a good chance they'll be spotted by the Four Hunters.

> You've come upon a narrow cleft in the side of the sheer mountainside. A 20-foot-wide ledge winds up the mountain's face to this cleft. Entrance into the cleft is blocked by a 30-foot-high wall set between two 60-foot-high stone towers. A mighty iron portcullis bars a short 20-foot-high tunnel passing through the wall into a courtyard beyond, in which you can see a second cyclopean curtain wall twice has high as the first. The biting wind whips clouds of fallen snow up from the ground nearby, shrouding the view with a soft haze.

Eldrua and her minions have been inhabiting the Hold for quite some time now. When they first attacked the frost giants who lived here, the resulting battle was furious. The derro used their training in fighting giants to deadly effect, and the giants tried desperately to stem the assault by engineering strategic cave-ins throughout the fortress. But it was all for naught; their forces soon fell to Eldrua and her demonic, derro, and undead minions.

Walls and Ceilings: Today, the interior of the Hold is absolutely lightless; characters without darkvision need to provide their own light. The Hold itself is carved directly out of the rock of the mountainside and supported by arches and pillars where appropriate. Ceilings in halls are 20 feet high; in large rooms they are often over 30 feet high. The walls and ceilings are unsafe in many places; the cave-ins orchestrated by the giants took their toll on the Hold's structural integrity. A successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Craft (stonemasonry) check (DC 20) reveals this hidden danger. Remember that Craft checks can be made untrained as Intelligence checks. A dwarf makes this check even if the player of the dwarf doesn't call for it. Dealing 20 points of damage to a section of wall or ceiling (after penetrating the stone's hardness of 8) or by breaking it with a successful Strength check (DC 24) causes a localized collapse. Such collapses are usually minor and inflict 3d6 damage to all creatures within 10 feet, or no damage on a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 15). More details on collapses can be found on page 114 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Natural caverns are more stable. Causing a cave-in here can be done by dealing 40 points of damage to a section of wall or ceiling, or by breaking it with a successful Strength check (DC 30).

Doors: All doors in the Hold are made of stone. They are twice the size of human-sized doors but are relatively easy to break through due to the cave-ins. Also found in various locations throughout the dungeon are portcullises made of iron. Eldrua has disabled all of the winches that used to operate the portcullises so they pose greater obstacles to intruders; she and most of her minions can bypass them with ease by using nightmares to become ethereal or with other magical effects.

- **Stone Door:** 8 inches thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28.
- **Iron Portcullis:** 2 inches thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28, Lift DC 25.

Random Encounters: As the characters explore the Hold, there is a 10% chance per hour of encountering 1d6 spectres (40%) or 2d6 wraiths (60%). These undead can pass through walls with ease, making them efficient and highly mobile guardians. Eldrua directly controls only a small number of these undead, but their ability to create spawn under their own control has made them quite numerous. There is a finite amount of undead that can be encountered in this manner; no more than twenty spectres or sixty wraiths can be encountered before the local supply runs out. Slaying most or all of them before the final encounter drastically reduces Eldrua's defenses (see area 13 for more details). If the party seems to be doing especially well against the defenses of the hold, the Four Hunters set up an ambush somewhere in the Hold to try to stop them.

- **Spectre:** hp 45 each; *Monster Manual* 169.
- **Wraith:** hp 32 each; *Monster Manual* 185.

1. Front Gate. Access to the courtyard is blocked by a 10-foot thick stone wall. The wall is 30 feet high but a short tunnel passes through its center. The two iron portcullises are both down and locked. To gain entry they must be destroyed, raised, or bypassed. For high-level characters, this should not prove

a major problem; any number of spells work to transport characters into the courtyard. The icy walls can be climbed with a successful Climb check (DC 25).

Although the ledge that leads to the gate is rarely less than 20 feet wide, it is quite icy and slippery. Characters walking on the ledge are safe as long as they take only one move-equivalent action per round; anything in excess of this requires a Balance check (DC 15) to avoid slipping and falling. Characters who slip and fall within 5 feet of the edge must make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid sliding over the edge and falling 200 feet to the rocky gorge far below (20d6 points of damage).

2. Courtyard.

Beyond the outer wall is a large courtyard. Windblown snow lies in huge drifts against the walls and the ground is littered with rubble. A second massive wall bordered by immense towers bisects the courtyard, and you can see a large building protruding from the mountainside through this wall's set of portcullises. The wind howls as it blows over the cleft in the mountainside, setting your nerves on edge. Beyond the howling of the wind, though, is a deeper menace that sends chills up your spine and turns your blood to ice.

Although this area might seem empty at first glance, it is well guarded. The strange sense of foreboding is caused by the proximity of the *Deadgate;* this foreboding continues to haunt the characters until the artifact is destroyed. The ledges that overlook the courtyard to the east and west are 30 feet high.

Creatures (EL 12 day/15 night): During the day, this area is guarded by three retrievers that lurk on the ledges to the east and west; at night the area is also guarded by the Four Hunters, each of which represents approximately 58% of Eldrua's total levels.

Hunter, Female Simulacrum of Eldrua Ftr1/Nec6/Lor1 (4): CR 8; Medium-size Humanoid (Dwarf) (4 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 1d10+2 plus 6d4+12 plus 1d4+2; hp 45; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (+1 Dex, +10 magic full plate); Atk +7 melee (2d4+4 plus 1d6 additional damage that varies with each scythe/×4 crit, *+1 scythe*); SA spells; SQ dwarf, sunlight vulnerability, lore of true stamina; SR 18; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 19, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +9, Craft (armorsmithing) +10, Craft (trapmaking) +8, Craft (weaponsmithing) +10, Handle Animal +7, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (religion) +14, Ride +17, Spellcraft +14. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge–arcana).

Spells (5/6/5/4/3; base DC = 14 + spell level): 0–*disrupt undead, flare* (×4); 1st–*cause fear, enlarge, expeditious retreat, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement, shield;* 2nd–*blindness/deafness, blur, bull's strength, endurance, ghoul touch;* 3rd–*clairaudience/clairvoyance, haste, keen edge, vampiric touch;* 4th–*dimension door, enervation, stoneskin.*

Possessions: +2 full plate, energized scythe*, diamond dust for *stoneskin* (three applications).

*(Each of the Four Hunters wields a magic scythe of some sort: One wields a *+1 flaming scythe,* one a *+1 shock scythe,* one a *+1 frost scythe,* and one a *+1 caustic scythe.* Treat a caustic scythe as a flaming scythe, save that it does acid damage instead of fire damage.)

Note also that their suits of full plate are effectively unholy raiments of Orcus; anyone of any alignment can wear the armor without fear of physical harm, but clerics, paladins, and good-aligned characters should find the act of donning the armor blasphemous and repugnant.

Nightmares (4): hp 47 each; *Monster Manual* 140.

Retrievers (3): hp 55 each; *Monster Manual* 41.

Tactics: While guarding the area, the Four Hunters remain ethereal and watch intruders approach, then retreat to inform Eldrua after they open the kennel to release the retrievers. Eldrua then stations the Hunters in area 11 with orders to prevent interlopers from distracting her final touches to the *Deadgate.* The Hunters cast *bull's strength* and *endurance* on themselves at the start of each night's watch; when they see trouble coming they also cast *keen edge* and *stoneskin.* Note that the Four Hunters can cast *flare, blindness/deafness, blur,* and *dimension door* with ease while wearing full plate armor, as all of these spells have verbal components only. They attempt to use their other spells only in emergencies due to the 35% arcane spell failure chance their armor imposes on them.

Development: In the likely event that the characters retreat to rest and regroup after assaulting the Hold, they find this area unguarded on future visits. Eldrua chooses instead to mount her defenses from deeper in the hold where the sunlight won't penalize her minions.

3. Guard Towers. These guard towers were once used by the giants to scan the icy valley below. Since the Hold's fall, the towers have seen little use. Each tower consists of one internal floor. The floors of the southern towers are 30 feet above the ground, but the northern two are set at ground level. The tower interiors were used as arms storage for the giants. Their huge weapons remain here still but have fallen into disrepair from neglect. All four towers are made of stone; they have no windows or arrow slits since the giants only stationed guards on the tower roofs. The two southern towers are 60 feet high, and the two northern ones are 120 feet high.

Each tower contains a narrow staircase that leads to a trap door that grants access to the roof. Although none of the towers are currently manned, the Hunters spend periods of their watch here in ethereal form, especially if Eldrua becomes aware of the PCs' approach.

4. Collapsed Cavern.

The cave mouth expands into a large cavern filled with drifts of snow and ice. Crystals sparkle softly on the north and south walls, but the eastern wall is a jumbled mass of fallen rubble. Partially buried under the rubble is the corpse of a huge white dragon. The creature has been dead for months. The rock fall has buried most of its body, from which only the shoulders, neck, and one wing and one claw protrude.

Of the dragon's head there is no sign; it has been severed cleanly from the neck. Judging by the amount of frozen blood in the area, this was likely the cause of the dragon's death, not the rockfall.

The dragon was an exceptionally charismatic old white dragon named Lyrixys who had forged an alliance with Jarl Gnorgrak. She was among the first to be slain when Eldrua's army attacked, falling to the derro loremaster herself. The

death thrashings of the dragon were what brought the roof of the cavern down. Her head now graces one of the spikes of the *Deadgate*.

5. Kennel.

The temperature inside the fortress is noticeably warmer than the chill mountain air outside, enough that you can no longer see your breath. As you inhale, the stink of this chamber hits you like a hammer, and as your eyes adjust you see the source. The bodies of nearly a dozen frost giants and half that number of huge, white-pelted wolves lie in a heap at the far end of the room. The bodies seem to have been mostly eaten and the bones gnawed. Worse, every last giant corpse is missing its head.

This room was where the frost giants kept their many winter wolf pets. Eldrua chose to stash the decapitated dead generated from her assault on the Hold here. She couldn't raise the bodies as functional undead without heads but figured they would come to some use eventually.

6. Mess Hall.

Like many of the other chambers you have seen, this room is partially collapsed. The presence of dozens of ruined and overturned tables makes you think this was once the giants' mess hall. Huge swaths of blood stain the floors, walls, and even ceiling of this room; a huge battle must have occurred here. Of more immediate interest are the four huge skeletal figures with writhing cartilaginous tongues and roiling viscera dangling from their torsos lurching toward you.

At the far end of the room, the collapsing ceiling broke through into the large cavern that once served as Lyrixys's lair (areas 5 and 16). A Large or smaller-sized creature can clamber up this crumbling slope of loose boulders and stones with a successful Climb check (DC 15). Failure indicates the rubble shifts, causing a minor landslide that pushes the climber (and anyone behind him) back into the main room and dealing 3d6 points of damage. Huge creatures must make an Escape Artist check (DC 20) to fit through the passageway; larger creatures simply don't fit.

Creatures (EL 13): The four skeletal creatures are frost giant mohrgs created by the *Scythe of Orcus*. If they are defeated, the party quickly finds that there is little of value on or near them.

Frost Giant Mohrgs (4): CR 8*; Large Undead (15 ft. tall); HD 28d12; hp 225 each; Initiative +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +6 natural); Atk +22 melee (1d8+9, 2 slams), +17 melee touch (paralysis, tongue); SA improved grab, paralyzing touch, create spawn; SQ undead; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +16; Str 29, Dex 11, Con —, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +21, Hide +14, Listen +18, Move Silently +18, Spot +18, Swim +20. *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack.

***Ad Hoc XP Award:** These mohrgs are twice the size of normal mohrgs and much more dangerous; award 200% the normal XP points for killing them.

7. Dragon Lair.

The crystalline walls of this huge cavern sparkle in your light, reflecting it back a hundredfold. The air here seems unnaturally cold . . . cold enough that it hurts to breathe. Thick sheets of ice coat the floor of the cave. To the west, the cavern ends abruptly in a huge rockfall. To the east, the massive cave dwindles away into darkness.

Anyone walking on the icy floor of this cave must make a Balance check (DC 15) to avoid slipping and falling. In addition, the temperature in this cavern is well below freezing. An unprotected character (someone who didn't take special precautions against the cold) must make a Fortitude saving throw once every 10 minutes (DC 15, +1 per previous check), taking 1d6 points of cold subdual damage on a failure. Neither of these hazards pose any hindrance to the two creatures who lurk in this cavern.

Creatures (EL 14): Although the old white dragon Lyrixys perished when Eldrua invaded, she lives on as twin simulacra Eldrua created not long after. Totally under her control, these two dragon simulacra guard this cavern, the one conventional entrance to the inner reaches of Eldrua's new fortress. Although the simulacra only possess roughly half of Lyrixys's knowledge, skills, and experience, they are nevertheless formidable foes.

Old White Dragon Simulacra (2): CR 12; Huge Dragon; HD 24d12+120; hp 162 each; Init +0; Spd 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft., burrow 30 ft.; AC 31 (-2 size, +23 natural); Atk +31 melee (2d8+9, bite), +26 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws), +26 melee (1d8+4, 2 wings), +26 melee (2d6+13, tail slap); SA crush (Reflex save DC 21 or take 2d8+13 damage and be pinned), breath weapon (8d6 cone of cold, DC 27), frightful presence (DC 23), spells, spell-like abilities; SQ immune to sleep, paralysis, and cold; double damage from fire except on a successful saving throw; blindsight; keen senses; icewalking; damage reduction 10/+1; SR 21; AL CE; SV Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 29, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

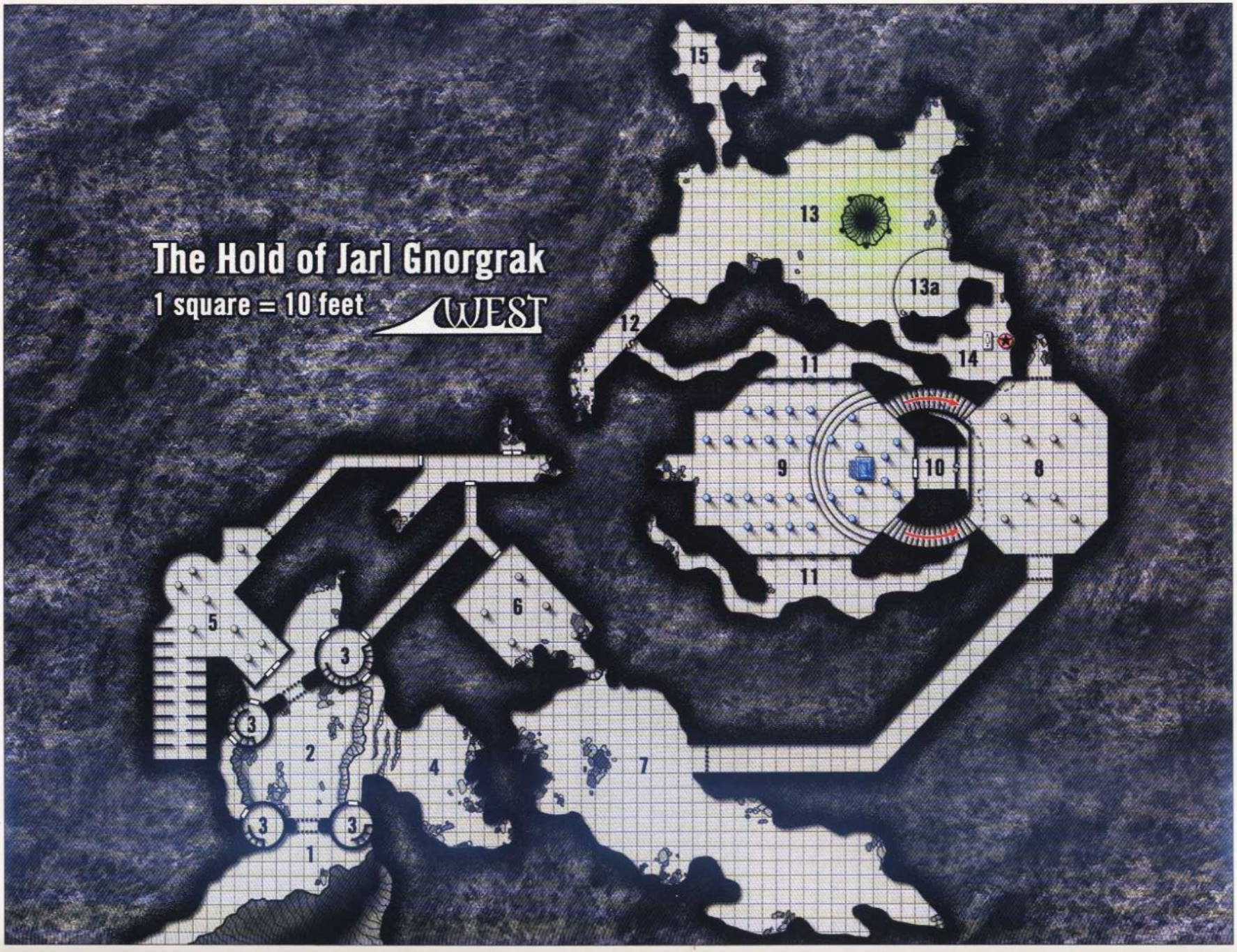
Skills: Bluff +14, Concentration +18, Knowledge (nature) +14, Listen +16, Scry +14, Search +14, Spellcraft +14, Spot +16. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Power Attack.

Spell-like Abilities: 3/day—*gust of wind, fog cloud, freezing fog*. Spell-like abilities are used as spells cast by an 8th-level sorcerer.

Spells (6/6; save DC 11 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic;* 1st—*expeditious retreat, mage armor, ray of enfeeblement*. The two simulacra cast spells as 3rd-level sorcerers.

Treasure: When he was still alive, Jarl Gnorgrak allowed Lyrixys to keep a sizable amount of treasure. When Eldrua took over, she claimed the treasure's magic items but left the coins and other valuables here, as she had little use for them at the time. This treasure can be found heaped in the southeastern spur of the cavern. It consists of 10,000 sp, 5,000 gp, eight gemstones (1,000 gp, 600 gp, 500 gp, 120 gp, 110 gp (×2), 90 gp, 13 gp, and 9 gp), and a gold and ivory box (worth 600 gp) that contains five rings (2,000 gp, 1,800 gp, 1,000 gp, 900 gp, and 200 gp).

Tactics: The two white dragon simulacra are charged with preventing anyone from passing through their cavern into the inner reaches of the Hold. They are savage and potent fighters who coordinate their attacks. One of the two engages in melee


The Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak
1 square = 10 feet
WEST
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while the other casts spells and uses breath weapons from afar; once all ranged spells are depleted, the two dragons switch positions. Being simulacra, they have little personality of their own and are not interested in parlaying. They don't pursue anyone who flees their cave unless they flee toward area 17.

8. Trophy Hall.

This vast room could serve as a meeting area for a small army, but its main purpose was obviously to display the trophies of a powerful line of frost giant kings. Dozens of heads of ogres, humans, dwarves, and even giants cover every available inch of wall space. Of more interest are the three massive stuffed monsters on display in the center of the room. One is a huge, purple, many-legged reptile. The second is also a huge purple reptile, but this one has twelve snakelike heads. The final trophy is perhaps the most impressive: a monstrous, centipede-like creature covered with razor sharp spines and a pair of winglike fins. The ceiling vaults high overhead into the darkness.

The three central trophies (a behir, a cryohydra, and a fiendish remorhaz) were Gnorgrak's favorites; he slew the beasts, then had them mounted on wire frames and put on display to impress his most important visitors. Gnorgrak went so far as to have each of the trophies coated in a special alchemical resin that grants each hardness 5. Far more dangerous is the guardian Eldrua stationed here to ambush any invaders.

The ceiling in this room arches to a height of 120 feet. The collapsed tunnel to the north once led to the inner reaches of the Hold, including Gnorgrak's personal chambers and the Hold treasury. Given time and enough resources, an enterprising party might be able to uncover the buried treasure of the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak.

Creatures (EL 14): One of Eldrua's greatest triumphs is the capture of Drusalakas, a chaotic evil death slaad. Eldrua managed to summon and contain the slaad with a *greater planar binding* spell cast from a scroll. Not long thereafter, Eldrua convinced Drusalakas to serve her until the completion of the *Deadgate*, at which time she has promised to shunt a couple dozen human souls off to Drusalakas's own lair on the lower planes. The death slaad highly doubts that Eldrua will honor her end of the bargain, but even if she does he plans to turn on her the instant the *Deadgate* is fully functioning. Drusalakas is no idiot; he believes that if he can strike at Eldrua when she is weakened after finishing the *Deadgate*, he can wrest complete control of the device away from Orcus and focus all of its captured souls into his own realm instead. Drusalakas plans to use these captured souls to transform himself into a slaad even more powerful than a death slaad. Until the *Deadgate* is finished, though, Drusalakas plays the subservient minion and counts the days before his own plans can be set in motion.

Drusalakas, Male Death Slaad: CR 13; Large Outsider (10 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 23d8+138; hp 267; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft. (reduced due to armor); AC 34 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +14 natural, +8 armor); Atk +35 melee (1d10+12/×3 crit, *+3 halberd of dancing*), or +32 melee (3d8+9 and stun, 2 claws), +30 melee (4d6+4, bite); SA stun, spell-like abilities, summon slaad; SQ fast healing 5; damage reduction 20/+2; acid, cold, electricity, fire, and sonic resistance 5; telepathy; alternate form; AL CE; SV Fort +18, Ref +15, Will +16; Str 28, Dex 16, Con 23, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 18.

Skills: Climb +32, Escape Artist +26, Hide +26, Jump +32, Knowledge (arcana) +30, Knowledge (religion) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +30, Listen +30, Move Silently +26, Search +30, Spot +30. *Feats:* Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack.

SA—Stun (Ex): A death slaad can use Stunning Fist (as the feat), three times per day. The save DC is 25.

See page 168 in the *Monster Manual* for descriptions of other death slaad special attacks and qualities (which remain unchanged despite Drusalakas's increased size).

Possessions: +4 shadow scale mail, ring of evasion, +3 halberd of dancing, gold necklace set with black star sapphires worth 6,000 gp.

***Ad Hoc XP Award:** Drusalakas is exceptionally large and stout for a death slaad; award 150% the normal amount of experience for defeating him.

Tactics: When the party enters the room, Drusalakas is hiding somewhere in it; despite his size, his natural skill and magic armor makes it very likely that he remains hidden, allowing him to use his spell-like abilities. During the first 3 rounds, he animates the three monster trophies using *animate objects* and directs them to attack the party. Allow PCs a Spot check (DC 30) to notice that there's something not right about these creatures when the first is animated. Give them a +4 circumstance bonus to the check if they ask whether the creatures look stuffed or mounted, and give them a +6 circumstance bonus if the check is made after the first round of combat to notice that the creatures aren't really alive and pose little threat.

Once the heroes are fighting the animated monsters, Drusalakas continues to harass the PCs with spells that don't give his location away such as *circle of death, fear, finger of death, fireball, power word blind,* and *implosion.* Once his location is discovered, he'll protect himself with a *cloak of chaos,* cast *fly* on himself, and fly up to the ceiling to continue his spell attacks. If he enters melee, Drusalakas activates his dancing weapon at once, then uses his Power Attack feat on all claw and bite attacks, dropping +10 from his attack rolls and adding +10 to all damage rolls.

Animated Trophies (3): Huge Construct; HD 2d10; hp 11 each; Init +0; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (+4 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); Face 10 ft. by 20 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ construct, hardness 5; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -5; Str 12, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1.

*Although the three animated objects are Huge and occupy space as such, their respective volumes are actually those of Medium-size creatures, which is what enables Drusalakas to animate them in the first place. Thus, their stats are identical to those of Medium-size animated objects. Note also that, just like summoned monsters, PCs do not receive experience for defeating the animated objects; they are considered part of the challenge inherent in defeating the death slaad.

Development: Drusalakas is a dangerous foe, but also an intelligent one. If he survives the encounter with the players after forcing them to retreat, he'll telepathically give a full report of the combat to Eldrua and ask her permission to hunt down the fleeing party to finish the job; Eldrua grants permission for him to do so. He'll trail the party, wait for them to let their guard down, and then start hitting them again with his spell-like abilities from a suitable hiding place.

9. Throne Room.

You have entered a huge throne room. The north and south walls depict realistic carvings of various frost giant deities. Massive pillars support the arched ceiling about 200 feet above, their sides carved to resemble dozens of huge axes stacked haft to head. The eastern section of the throne room is dominated by a large upraised and similarly pillared area, at the center of which squats a massive throne. The most breathtaking thing about the whole scene is that both pillars and throne alike seem to be carved out of solid ice. The beauty of the pillars and the throne are marred only by the field of dead and decapitated giant bodies that litter the ground. Sitting in the throne itself is a huge, regal giant, staring off into nothingness with a matched greataxe and battleaxe at his sides.

This was the main throne room of the Hold, where Jarl Gnorgrak held audiences and ruled his fortress. It was also where the decisive battle against Eldrua took place. The fallen derro were taken and thrown into the Abyssal pit for Orcus, but Eldrua allowed the giant bodies to lie as they fell.

The pillars and throne are made of ice that has been magically enhanced so it never melts and possesses the strength of solid stone (treat as such for hardness and hit points).

The current occupant of the throne is one of the two simulacra Eldrua made of Jarl Gnorgrak; a successful Knowledge (nobility) or Bardic Knowledge check (DC 30) confirms the identity of the regal frost giant. He seems to be breathing softly, but is otherwise immobile.

Characters who examine the southern or northern carvings and make a successful Search check (DC 20) discover several cleverly hidden peepholes to areas **20** and **21** respectively.

Creatures (EL 12/15 with the Four Hunters and their nightmares): If the party attacks the Gnorgrak simulacrum (which is 54% of the original's power) immediately upon sighting it, they all gain a surprise attack round before it and the frost giant mohrgs animate and attack.

Gnorgrak, Male Frost Giant Simulacrum Rgr3: CR 10; Large Giant (15 feet tall); HD 14d8+70 (frost giant) plus 6d10+30 (ranger); hp 105; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 22 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +9 natural, +5 chain shirt); Atk +21/+16 melee (1d12+9/×3 crit, *+2 greataxe*), +20 melee (1d12+4/×3 crit, masterwork greataxe), or +11 ranged (2d6+9, rock); Reach 10 ft.; SA rock throwing, favored enemy (dwarf); SQ rock catching, cold subtype, two-weapon fighting; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 29, Dex 9, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 19.

Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Climb +13, Handle Animal +8, Jump +13, Knowledge (nature) +3, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +6. *Feats:* Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Quickdraw, Sunder, Track, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +2 greataxe, masterwork battleaxe, 6 throwing rocks.

Frost Giant Mohrgs (3): hp 225 each; see area **9** for complete statistics.

Hunter, Female Simulacrum of Eldrua Ftr1/Wiz6/Lor1 (up to 4): See area **2** for complete statistics.

Nightmares (up to 4): hp 47 each; see area **2** for complete statistics.

Tactics: If the party opts to speak with Gnorgrak, the simulacrum pretends to be the real thing. He spins a yarn about how the frost giants' home was invaded by a swarm of derro and demons and how the nasty little creatures used magic and a terrible magical scythe to cut down his kin and animate their bodies to fight with the enemy. He is unsure why he has been spared, but he does know that the leader of the derro is a female necromancer and that she has cursed him somehow so that he cannot leave this throne. She brings him food and water, but that is all; Gnorgrak surmises that she does this just to torment him, forcing him to look upon his slain kin for the rest of his natural life. Anyone who wants can try to make a Sense Motive check to verify this story. Success indicates that the PC senses there is something odd about the tale. (Gnorgrak has no ranks in Bluff, but he does receive a +4 bonus to the roll from his high Charisma.)

Once Gnorgrak finishes his tale, he asks the party if they think they can defeat the derro necromancer for him. He promises great rewards if they do so, and begins to interrogate them as to their skills and if they have a "secret plan" to defeat her. Once the party seems to have told all they want to tell, or as soon as they look like they're not buying the story, Gnorgrak attacks the nearest character with a roar, using his Quickdraw feat to pick up both axes as a free action. As soon as Gnorgrak attacks, three dead frost giants lying nearby (actually mohrgs) animate and attack as well.

This encounter was, of course, set up by Eldrua to trick the party into spilling their guts about any secret plans they might have. Any of the surviving Hunters wait patiently in areas **20** and **21** (two to each if all four survive, otherwise they are all in area **21**), watching through the peepholes in the wall separating the two areas and listening for any news the characters provide about themselves. The instant an attack begins, the Four Hunters and their nightmare mounts become ethereal; one races north to inform Eldrua of any developments and information, while the remaining Hunters race into the throne room to join the attack. If the battle lasts for more than 6 rounds, the Hunter who went to inform Eldrua arrives on the seventh round to join the battle.

10. Advisor's Room. This room was often used by Gnorgrak's advisor, a powerful outcast drow wizard. When Eldrua struck, the drow decided to move on to greener pastures; he gathered his gear and *teleported* away to parts unknown.

The secret door in the eastern wall can be found with a successful Search check (DC 25). It opens into a small room with a natural tunnel leading out of the north and south walls.

11. Watchposts. Both of these areas were once guard rooms. The southern tunnel was blocked when Gnorgrak ordered the collapse of the main hall, but the northern tunnel still leads to that portion of the great hall that leads to the Temple.

The secret door at the end of the northern tunnel is relatively easy to find from the east side, requiring a Search check (DC 15) to locate; from the other side, a Search check (DC 25) is necessary to locate it.

12. Temple Doors.

The southern extent of this vaulted passageway lies choked in rubble, but to the northeast it ends in a massive pair of ancient stone double doors. The doors stand over 25 feet high, and their faces bear intricate carvings of a mighty

frost giant of immense proportions standing atop a range of mountains commanding a legion of his kin in battle on the plains below. The giant himself seems malformed and fiendish, and he wields a massive hammer the size of a small city in his fists. At his feet yawns a gaping, steaming pit.

A strange dull yellow-green light seems to pulsate around the edges of the door, and you can hear a low humming as if from an immense swarm of gargantuan wasps coming from somewhere beyond the portal.

Eldrua rarely uses these doors, as she prefers to enter and exit the Hold via her steed's ability to become ethereal or teleportation. The doors vibrate with the magical potency of the *Deadgate* in the room beyond; this is also the source of the humming and the light leaking around the frame of the door.

A successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 30) reveals the doors depict one of the unholy gods of the frost giants, the demon lord Kostchtchie. Those who received visions of the *Deadgate* over the Abyssal Pit are convinced that the pit depicted in the carving is the same as the one in their vision.

Trap (EL 8): Any PC who is not a worshiper of the demon lord Kostchtchie places himself and his companions in dire peril if he attempts to open these doors. The doors themselves automatically *arcane lock* at the 20th level of effect whenever they are closed. Any non-worshiper of Kostchtchie who tries to open these doors must make two Will saving throws (the first at DC 20 and the second at DC 17). If the first is failed, the victim is struck by a *feeblemind* spell cast at 20th level. If the second saving throw is failed, the victim becomes held for 20 rounds from a *hold person* spell cast at 20th level.

The round after the failed attempt to open the doors, the temperature in the area drops to well below freezing (unprotected characters might take damage as detailed on page 86 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). At the same time, one of the Chosen of Kostchtchie appears before the person who tried to open the door; this half-fiend frost giant barbarian attacks immediately, fighting to the death. Once the door trap is triggered, it becomes inert for 1 minute while its unholy energies replenish; attempts to open the massive doors at this time can be made safely.

Massive Stone Doors: 2 feet thick; Hardness 8; hp 360; Break DC 32.

Door Trap: CR 8; *feeblemind, hold person, summon monster IX*; Will save (DC 20) avoids *feeblemind*, Will save (DC 17) avoids *hold person;* Search (DC 34); Disable Device (DC 34).

Creature (EL 12): This half-fiend/half-frost giant is summoned from the Abyss; it vanishes upon death or 20 rounds after it appears, whichever comes first. A Chosen of Kostchtchie looks like a bald frost giant but with huge bat wings, glowing yellow eyes, sharklike teeth, and six huge twisted horns on its brow. Only one is summoned at a time; if the first is slain and the trap resets, another is summoned.

Chosen of Kostchtchie, Male Half-Frost Giant/Half-Fiend Bbn1: CR 12; Large Outsider (Cold) (15 ft. tall); HD 14d8+84 plus 1d12+6; hp 161 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 50 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 21 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +10 natural); Atk +21/+16 melee (2d8+16/crit 19-20 ×3, huge warhammer), or +21/+21 melee (1d8+11, 2 claws), +16 melee (1d6+5, bite); Reach 10 ft.; SA rage 1/day, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; immune to poison; acid, electricity, and fire resistance 20, cold subtype; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 33 (+11), Dex 13, Con 23, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +28, Concentration +23, Intimidate +11, Jump +28, Knowledge (religion) +19, Knowledge (the planes) +19, Listen +17, Spot +17, Swim +28. *Feats:* Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (warhammer), Power Attack, Sunder.

Spell-Like Abilities (as a 15th-level sorcerer): 3/day—*darkness, poison, unholy aura;* 1/day—*desecrate, unholy blight, contagion, blasphemy, unhallow, horrid wilting.*

13. Temple.

You have entered a massive natural cavern. Unlike the darkness that permeates the rest of the fortress, this natural cathedral is bathed in a stomach-churning yellow-green light that undulates and flickers as if cast from an underwater source. You catch a glimpse of two side passages to the north and one to the south, as well as two overhanging natural balconies overlooking the cavern to the far east, before your gaze is held by the sight at the cavern's center.

Poised above a steaming pit in the floor is a twisted latticework of stone and metal; the gleaming beams of the skeletal tower twist up into the air nearly to the cavern roof almost 200 feet above. The tower looks vaguely like a crooked ram's horn; the thing is lit from below by that nauseating light which seems to flow from the pit in an almost liquid manner. But most terrible of all are the hundreds of severed heads impaled on the cruel barbed hooks that seem to cover every square foot of the tower's matrix. You can see human, elven, dwarven, gnomish, halfling, derro, giant, and even a white dragon's head affixed to these hooks, and worse . . . each and every one of them twitch and writhe with an unholy life. The low vibrating sound you heard actually seems to be coming from the mouths of the heads. The sight of the monstrous tower turns your blood to ice, and it is only with great difficulty that you can tear your gaze away to meet the horrors that race toward you to defend their unholy construction.

The party has reached the heart of the problem; they stand before the nearly completed *Deadgate*. The proximity of the *Deadgate* has specific effects on the area, consult the description of this terrible device for details.

The pit beneath the *Deadgate* seems to be bottomless. In truth, at a depth of two miles, the pit terminates in a semi-active gateway to some unnamed location in the Abyss. The gateway is generally only one-way; objects cannot enter this realm from the other side, but anything from this side can pass through into the Abyss. Complex rituals and forgotten rites might open the portal so that creatures from the other side can invade, of course, but neither Eldrua nor the giants who used to live here knew of any such rituals.

The two balconies overlooking the cavern are both 50 feet high; climbing up to them is possible with a Climb check (DC 15). There is nothing of value on either balcony.

Creatures (EL 16 for Eldrua, her mount, and the Gnorgrak simulacrum, +.5 per additional Eldrua simulacrum and mount, +.5 for each round undead are gated in by Eldrua): The type of opposition the party faces in this climactic encounter varies somewhat on how successful they have been up to this point. Eldrua and her nightmare mount wait for the party here, of course. Also waiting here to defend the *Deadgate* are any of the Four Hunters the party has not yet disposed of, as well as a second simulacrum of the long dead Jarl Gnorgrak. As the battle begins, Eldrua attempts to call in additional undead reinforcements from the surrounding area, using the magic of the *Scythe of Orcus* to gate them in.

Eldrua is gaunt for a derro, but no less potent a creature. Her skin is a pale blue, her hair pale golden, and her eyes completely white. Her haunting beauty is marred only by her grating voice and the blasphemous tattoos that cover her body. These tattoos are of icons and unholy symbols sacred to Orcus, including an image of the Wand of Orcus on each forearm and a stylized interpretation of her deity's goatish visage directly on her face. She dresses in black, diaphanous robes wrapped with a single long red silk cord. She doesn't often deign to speak to the living, as she finds their presence irritating and foul. The sacrifice of her living derro followers many months ago to fuel the energies of the *Deadgate* was an event she had been anticipating for some time. Now, completion of the foul device has consumed her every waking moment.

Eldrua, Female Derro Ftr1/Wiz6/Lor7: CR 15; Medium-size Humanoid (Dwarf) (4 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 1d10+2 plus 6d4+12 plus 7d4+14; hp 77; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 25 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge trick, +4 *mage armor*, +4 *ring of protection*, +2 *amulet of natural armor*); Atk +14/+9 (2d4+7/×4 crit, *Scythe of Orcus;* SA spells; SQ dwarf, darkvision 30 ft., sunlight vulnerability, loremaster secrets (the lore of true stamina, dodge trick, applicable knowledge, more newfound arcana, lore, greater lore, prohibited school (Enchantment); SR 18; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 15, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 24, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Concentration +19, Craft (armorsmithing) +13, Craft (sculpture) +11, Craft (weaponsmithing) +17, Handle Animal +7, Jump +12, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (religion) +17, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Ride +17, Scry +24, Spellcraft +24. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Mounted Combat, Quicken Spell, Ride-by Attack, Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Knowledge—arcana), Spirited Charge.

Spells (5/7/12/7/6/5/4/3; base DC = 17 + spell level): 0—*disrupt undead, ghost sound, mage hand, ray of frost, read magic;* 1st—*chill touch, mage armor* (already cast), *magic missile* (×2), *protection from good, shield, ray of enfeeblement;* 2nd—*blindness/deafness, bull's strength* (already cast), *cat's grace* (already cast), *darkness, endurance* (already cast), *ghoul touch* (×2), *invisibility, Melf's acid arrow* (×2), *obscure object, web;* 3rd—*dispel magic, displacement, keen edge, lightning bolt, nondetection, vampiric touch* (×2); 4th—*dimension door, enervation, ice storm, phantasmal killer, scrying, stoneskin;* 5th—*cone of cold, expeditious retreat* (quickened), *magic jar, shield* (quickened), *true strike* (quickened); 6th—*disintegrate, blur* (quickened), *Tenser's transformation, spectral hand* (quickened); 7th—*finger of death, haste* (quickened), *limited wish.*

Possessions: Scythe of Orcus, +4 headband of intellect, bracers of reaping (see the sidebar), *+2 amulet of natural armor, +4 ring of protection, ring of wizardry II, ring of invisibility* (generally not worn), *boots of striding and springing, iridescent spindle ioun stone,* scroll of *contact other plane,* scroll of *dream* (×3), scroll of *nightmare* (×3), *potion of bull's strength* (for *Tenser's transformation*), 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds,* military saddle, small, gem-studded ivory statuette of Eldrua worth 2,000 gp (*contingency* focus), 3 doses of diamond dust worth 250 gp each (for *stoneskin* spells).

Contingency: Eldrua has a *contingency* spell in effect: if she ever fails a Will saving throw, a *dispel magic* spell (cast at Eldrua's level) is triggered centered on her.

Gnorgrak Simulacrum: hp 133, see area 18 for complete statistics.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Deadgate (Minor Artifact)

A *Deadgate* is a terrible magical device that saw much use in ancient times in the Sueloise homeland. These monstrous artifacts consist of a matrix of stone and/or metal on which are impaled a number of heads; each head must come from a creature with a Charisma score of at least 14. A *Deadgate* can be up to 200 feet high. There is room for one head for each foot of height on a *Deadgate*. A *Deadgate's* aura of influence equals the number of heads impaled on it in miles.

When a *Deadgate* is first constructed (using the Craft Wondrous Item feat) it is empty of heads and considered dormant. Affixing a head to a *Deadgate* is a complex process that requires a day-long ritual per head and involves the casting of *animate dead* on the head. Once the *Deadgate* has a number of heads affixed to it equal to its height, it becomes active.

A dormant *Deadgate* influences a region equal to half the current number of heads mounted on it in miles. Any living creature in this region who dies feels the unholy lure of the *Deadgate* and suffers intense visions of Orcus waiting to devour him. Since the *Deadgate* is not fully functional yet, such souls eventually find their way into the Astral Plane and beyond. Those souls brought back by spells like *raise dead, resurrection,* and *true resurrection* in this area have to endure these terrible visions all over again. A being brought back to life awakens to screams and cries of terror, and suffers 2d4 points of temporary Wisdom damage as a result of the visions. In addition, a dormant *Deadgate* imbues an area equal to the current number of heads mounted on it in yards with unholy energies that duplicate the effect of a *desecrate* spell cast at the 13th-level of ability, making undead more difficult to turn in this area. Living creatures who attempt to sleep in this area must make a Will saving throw (DC 15) to avoid having horrible nightmares (identical to those caused by a *nightmare* spell cast at 13th level).

An active *Deadgate's desecrate* and *nightmare* radius is double that of a dormant one. In addition, the active *Deadgate* acts as an irresistible lure to the spirit of any creature who dies in its region of influence. Such spirits travel to the *Deadgate,* where they are absorbed and imprisoned by it. A *Deadgate* can hold a number of spirits equal to the number of heads mounted on its spikes. The creator of the *Deadgate* can then use these captured spirits to power spells or in the creation of magic items. One spirit replaces up to 1,000 experience points needed to cast a spell or create a magic item. Excess experience is lost. Once a spirit is used in this manner, it is destroyed forever, and one of the heads on the *Deadgate* merges with the main structure. The region of control for the *Deadgate* remains static until all of its heads are "used up," at which point the entire thing becomes nonmagical and a new *Deadgate* must be constructed.

A more diabolical use for a *Deadgate* is to build one over the site of a portal to another realm. A deity in such a realm would be able to siphon captured souls directly to his realm for his own use. Such souls do not consume heads on the *Deadgate;* a *Deadgate* built to serve this purpose never "runs dry" of supplemental magical energy.

Creatures whose souls have been captured by a *Deadgate* cannot be *raised* or *resurrected.*

Although they are well protected from magical attacks (a *Mordenkainen's disjunction* spell can destroy one), it is possible to destroy a *Deadgate* with sheer physical violence. A *Deadgate* has a hardness of 12 and can suffer 2 points of damage per attached head before it is destroyed. (Thus, the *Deadgate* in this adventure starts out with 390 hit points, and gains 2 more hit points per head added to it.) Damage done to a *Deadgate* does not reduce the total number of heads but is nearly impossible to repair.

The method for creating a *Deadgate* has been lost for ages. Certain powerful beings of the lower planes might retain this knowledge, and with their aid a mortal could conceivably craft a new *Deadgate,* although the process would take well over a year to complete. Most religions view them as blasphemous, since they steal souls from their proper resting place. The church of Wee Jas finds them especially abhorrent and foul.

Caster Level: 13th (with divine aid), 20th (without divine aid); *Weight:* 50 lb. per head.

Scythe of Orcus (Minor Artifact)

The *Scythe of Orcus* is a potent minor artifact the Demon Prince has been known to give to his favored minions. Although made entirely out of yellowed bone, it has the strength and hardness of adamantine. The Scythe itself is a *+3 unholy vorpal scythe of wounding.* Its wielder gains the Combat Reflexes feat. In addition, anything slain (but not beheaded) by the *Scythe of Orcus* rises again in 1d4 rounds as an undead creature (25% zombie, 25% wraith, 25% spectre, 25% mohrg). Undead created in this manner are free-willed, but the wielder of the Scythe can gate up to 30 HD of undead so created to her side as a standard action.

The Scythe has Intelligence 10, Wisdom 15, Charisma 17, and is chaotic evil. It can communicate with its wielder via empathy. If its wielder promotes the will of Orcus by action and deed, the Scythe is happy. Otherwise a conflict occurs; if the Scythe gains control, it immediately attacks its wielder as a *+3 scythe of dancing;* once its wielder is dead, it returns to Orcus with a blast of hot sulfurous wind.

Caster Level: 20th. *Weight:* 7 lb.

Bracers of Reaping

These wristbands look like normal protective wear. The bracers empower the wearer to use any sickle or scythe as if she were proficient in its use. If she already has proficiency with sickles or scythes, she gains a +2 competence bonus to attack rolls and a +1 competence bonus to damage dealt whenever using a sickle or scythe. Both bracers must be worn for the magic to be effective.

Caster Level: 4th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Magic Arms and Armor; *Market Price:* 5,100 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.

Hunter, Female Simulacrum of Eldrua Ftr1/Wiz6/Lor1 (up to 4): See area 2 for complete statistics.

Nightmares (up to 5): hp 47 each; see area 2 for complete statistics.

Tactics: Eldrua and her minions are a formidable lot. Once she becomes aware that the party is in her fortress, Eldrua casts the following spells on herself, each of which has a duration of 13 hours: *mage armor, bull's strength, cat's grace,* and *endurance.* If the party takes longer than 13 hours to reach her, these spell effects have ended. Eldrua is smart enough, however, to know not to assume the PCs have just left. If they don't arrive when she expects them to, she casts the spells on herself as soon as she can each day until she determines the adventurers aren't a threat to her plans any longer (through *scrying* or other means).

When the party enters this chamber, the simulacra race forth to engage in melee. Their main purpose is to keep the party away from Eldrua and the *Deadgate.*

Eldrua begins the battle mounted on her nightmare motionless on thin air 100 feet off the ground in the eastern end of

the cave. She casts *stoneskin* on herself and then attempts to gate in undead reinforcements from the surrounding area with the *Scythe of Orcus*. She can gate in one frost giant mohrg (from area 10), three spectres, or six wraiths per round in this manner. It is possible that the party has depleted her supply of undead; any attempt by her to gate in an undead whose population has been depleted fails, thereby making that action wasted. After each failed attempt, grant her an Intelligence check (DC 15) to realize that it's unlikely she'll be able to gate in reinforcements; otherwise she continues to attempt to gate in undead for 3 rounds before giving up. This is a reward for players who manage to pick apart her resources quickly and quietly before confronting her in her lair. If more than a day has passed since the party defeated all of a particular type of undead creature, Eldrua realizes those creatures are gone and won't try to gate any in.

Once she finishes or gives up gating in undead aid, she begins to blast the party with offensive spells. As she does this, she'll protect herself by casting her quickened spells (except for *haste*) as fast as she can. At this point, if the party is still fighting, she'll cast her quickened *haste* on herself followed instantly by *Tenser's transformation* and ride down on her nightmare to join the party in melee with the *Scythe of Orcus*. Her favorite tactic in this case is to continually make ride-by attacks on the party to minimize melee retaliation on herself.

If the party manages to reach her before she depletes her offensive ranged spells, Eldrua casts her quickened *haste* spell but won't cast *Tenser's transformation* unless the battle gets dicey and she needs the extra hit points; she's a bit wary about the spell since it keeps her from casting her other spells for several rounds.

Although this encounter might seem insurmountable by the party (especially if they aren't in top condition when it begins), there is an Achilles heel: the *Deadgate*. If the party tries to destroy or deactivate the *Deadgate* (details for this appear in the *Deadgate's* description at the end of the adventure), Eldrua panics. If she hasn't done so already, she casts her quickened *haste* and *Tenser's transformation* and flies into a berserk rage, riding down on the party and engaging them in melee, eschewing her ride-by tactics in favor of more attacks. The cessation of her tactical efforts might provide the PCs with the chance they need to defeat her, provided they can withstand the fury of her rage long enough.

A particularly effective method to destroy the *Deadgate* is to target the stone it is built on. The *Deadgate* has five anchor points over the Abyssal rift; doing 200 points of damage to an anchor point (hardness 8) has a cumulative 20% chance to send the entire thing tumbling down into the pit, destroying the *Deadgate*. Also, keep in mind that although the *Deadgate* is all but immune to spells, the stone it is built on is not. *Disintegrate, transmute rock to mud,* or even *stone shape* can easily destroy an anchor point in one fell swoop. Earthquake would likely destroy all five at once, although it might bring the roof down on the party's head!

If the party manages to destroy the *Deadgate*, Eldrua screams in rage and terror; she is also stunned for 1 round. If she still survives after her round of being stunned, Eldrua flies into a rage again and begins to attack the party with a renewed fury.

Just 1d3 rounds after the *Deadgate's* destruction, a blast of burning wind carrying with it the stink of a myriad open graves roars out of the Abyssal Gate. Orcus has come to exact revenge, as detailed in the "Concluding the Adventure" section.

Development: This encounter should be a tough one for the party, and it is likely to overwhelm them and force them to flee. If they do so, Eldrua sends any surviving minions after the party to finish the job. Eldrua herself remains behind to lick her wounds and scry on the fleeing party to keep track of their progress. If the party gets out of her fortress, all pursuing

monsters break off and return to the Temple, where they and Eldrua go back to working on the *Deadgate* while preparing for another possible attack by the PCs.

14. High Priest's Sanctum.

The decor of this large cavern seems to combine that of a giant bedroom with a giant personal shrine. The room appears to be lived in, unlike so much of the rest of the stronghold. A huge bed, table, chair, and bookshelf dominate the southern reaches of the room, and directly opposite the entrance is a huge statue of a demonic creature with the head of a snarling goat and a skull-tipped wand cradled in its claws. A blood-stained altar stone sits before the demonic statue.

The statue is of Orcus, as a successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 25) reveals. Originally, it was a statue of Kostchtchie, but Eldrua changed it into one of Orcus with a *fabricate* spell.

Treasure: Eldrua sleeps and performs personal religious rites in this room, but little else. She keeps little of value in here except for her spellbooks, which sit on a stand on the table next to the bed. Eldrua used a *limited wish* to duplicate the effects of a *permanent image* to make the table and anything placed on it look like a plain wooden nightstand on which sit a few blank sheets of parchment and a vial of ink.

If the spellbook is found, it proves to contain all of the spells Eldrua has memorized plus the following additional spells: 0—all; 1st—*cause fear, comprehend languages, detect undead, enlarge, identify, jump;* 2nd—*see invisibility;* 3rd—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, halt undead, magic circle against chaos, magic circle against evil, magic circle against good, magic circle against law, sleet storm;* 4th—*contagion, dimensional anchor, scrying, wall of ice;* 5th—*animate dead, contact other plane, dream, fabricate, lesser planar binding, nightmare, telekinesis, teleport;* 6th—*circle of death, contingency, legend lore, planar binding;* 7th—*plane shift, simulacrum.*

15. Research Lab.

This room contains several tables, across which are strewn reams of parchments, papers, scrolls, and books. Shelves filled with spell components line the walls, and the center of the room contains a long metal table covered with strange surgical instruments, vials of liquids, and unidentifiable tools. A fully functional forge sits unlit in the northwest corner of the room.

Eldrua set up this area to conduct research and create magic items and simulacra. Although there are no magic items stored here at this moment, there are nevertheless many items of value scattered about the room; these items are detailed in the **Treasure** section below.

A successful Spellcraft check (DC 22) reveals that the table in the center of the room and its attendant instruments are used for the creation and maintenance of simulacra. She has enough components on hand to repair 75 hit points of damage to simulacra. It takes her a day to heal a simulacrum up to its full hit point total; if the damaged simulacrum is still above 50% of its normal maximum she probably won't bother. She also reserves some of the components for the Hunters, which are her favorite creations. Remember that if Eldrua takes the time to repair one of her simulacra, the completion of the *Deadgate* slips by a day as well.

Treasure: Most of the valuable objects here are spell components. As mentioned above, there are enough reagents and other chemicals to repair 75 hit points of damage to simulacra; this material is worth 100 gp per remaining hit point to the proper buyer. In addition, the reams of notes in this chamber cover everything from simulacrum creation to necromantic theory to proper planar binding techniques to *Deadgate* construction; all of it is riddled with dogma related to the worship of Orcus. To certain wizards, this collection of books and loose scrolls might fetch upwards of 6,000 gp. Good-aligned PCs, especially clerics and paladins, should find most of this material abhorrent and foul, appropriate only as fuel for a fire. All told, there are 30 pounds of books and papers scattered on the various surfaces of the room.

In addition to hundreds of ordinary material components, the following items can be found here: 15 black onyx gems (50 gp each), 5 black silk pouches filled with crushed black pearls (500 gp each), 10 pearls (100 gp each), 6 doses of rare incense (250 gp each), and a rectangle of ivory strips (200 gp). Finally, there is a large mirror on one wall that Eldrua uses for scrying worth 1,800 gp.

Concluding the Adventure

This adventure comes to its conclusion 1d3 rounds after the destruction of the *Deadgate* or the death of Eldrua, whichever comes first. In all likelihood, this occurs while the party is in area 13, but if they are elsewhere, the events should play out the same behind the scenes. The text that follows assumes that the final encounter takes place in area 13. Read or paraphrase the following aloud if the PCs are present when the *Deadgate* collapses into the pit:

With a sudden uprising of foul mephitic wind, a towering form surges out of the Abyssal Pit. The remnants of the *Deadgate* shatter and fly apart, scattering hundreds of severed but now fully deceased heads in every direction. Any creature within 100 feet must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 15) or suffer 3d6 points of subdual damage from the explosion.

Rising above the blackness of the Abyssal Pit, his lower extremities vaporous and seething as they trail into the darkness below, is none other than Orcus, the Demon Prince of Undead.

The foul, massive behemoth roars in rage at the failure of one of his most promising minions. If she still lives, Eldrua falls to her knees and begs for mercy. Orcus has none of it; he locks her gaze with his and she stops trembling, lowers her arms, and raises her head as the *Scythe of Orcus* springs to life and decapitates her with one blinding strike.

Orcus roars again and then turns to face the party, his visage seething with hatred and rage. This hatred seems to be a physical presence in the room, and at once each party member feels a cold and utterly evil wave of thought invade their own. Orcus wordlessly warns the characters that they have gained a new enemy, and that he will one day see vengeance for their meddling. With that, the Demon Prince grows three times as large and almost seems ready to attack, but then at the last instant, a sudden downrush of wind spirals into the pit, taking the

ORCUS (DEMON PRINCE OF UNDEAD)

Although Orcus does not attack the heroes in this adventure, his statistics are provided if you wish to use him as a recurring villain. Orcus is a powerful foe, and not one who should be thrown lightly against even the best armed characters. Orcus prefers to be summoned to the Prime Material rather than be called.

Large Outsider (Evil, Chaos)
Hit Dice: 44d8+484 (682 hp)
Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (good)
AC: 42 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +32 natural)
Attacks: 2 slams +55 melee, sting +50 melee
Damage: Slam 1d10+12, sting 2d4+6 and poison
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, spells, poison, fear gaze, *call undead, call tanar'ri*, create spawn, *Wand of Orcus*
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 40/+5, SR 33, tanar'ri qualities, grant divine spells, speak with dead, true seeing
Saves: Fort +35, Ref +25, Will +334
Abilities: Str 35, Dex 12, Con 32, Int 26, Wis 29, Cha 32
Skills: Alchemy +55, Bluff +58, Concentration +58, Knowledge (arcana) +55, Knowledge (history) + 55, Knowledge (religion) +55, Knowledge (the planes) +55, Listen +56, Read Lips +54, Scry +55, Search +55, Sense Motive +56, Spellcraft +55, Spot +56, Use Magic Device +58
Feats: Cleave, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Rod, Craft Wondrous Item, Forge Ring, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (Necromancy)

Climate/Terrain: Any/The Abyss
Organization: Solitary or warband (Orcus plus 2d4 glabrezu, 1d4 marilith, 2d6 retrievers, 1d4 liches, 2d4 vampires, 4d8 bodaks, 4d8 spectres, and 4d10 wraiths)
Challenge Rating: 24
Treasure: Triple Standard plus *Wand of Orcus*
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: –

Orcus is known as the Demon Prince of Undead. He appears as a bloated, 15-foot-tall humanoid with a goat's head; ram-like horns protrude from his skull and his eyes blaze with unholy yellow light. His body is covered with matted gray hair, and his legs are goat-like and end in hooves. He has a pair of vast bat wings and a long tail tipped with a serrated stinger.

Orcus prefers to remain in his realm on the Abyss where he rules an empire of demons and undead. He lets these minions perform most of his tasks, leaving him time to plot the downfall of his hated enemy, Demogorgon. He is served on the Prime Material by shadowy cultists who believe that exceptional service in the name of Orcus grants them eternal unlife as one of his undead minions. These cultists are fanatic, cruel, and deplorable; they prefer to establish strongholds and temples dedicated to the Prince of Undead in catacombs below cemeteries and graveyards.

Orcus is one of countless demonic rulers of the Abyss, of which it is believed he is one of the more powerful. He has often tried to extend his influence into the Prime Material.

COMBAT

Orcus is a fearsome opponent who could single-handedly wipe out even a high-level party with relative ease. Against foes whose abilities he knows to be inferior to his own, he prefers to attack with pummeling blows from his fists and stings from his tail. Against more powerful foes, Orcus deploys his minions while he uses magic and the *Wand of Orcus* from afar.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): At will—*animate dead, blasphemy, charm person, clairvoyance/clairaudience, comprehend languages, create undead, deeper darkness, desecrate, detect magic, detect thoughts, fear, feeblemind, greater dispelling, lightning bolt, persistent image, polymorph any object, produce flame, project image, pyrotechnics, read magic, shapechange, suggestion, symbol, telekinesis, teleport without error, unhallow, unholy aura, unholy blight, wall of fire.* Once an hour—*create greater undead, destruction, dispel good, wail of the banshee.* Once a day—*implosion, time stop.* These abilities function as the spells cast by a 20th-level sorcerer (save DC 21 + spell level). Orcus can use any one of his "at will" spell-like abilities as a Quickened spell-like ability.

Spells (Sp): In addition to his spell-like abilities, Orcus casts divine spells from the cleric list and from the Chaos, Death, Destruction, and Evil domains as a 20th-level cleric (save DC 19 + spell level). He also casts spells from the wizard spell list as a 20th-level necromancer (save DC 18 + spell level). Despite being specialized in Necromancy, Orcus does not have a prohibited school of magic. He knows all the spells listed in the *Player's Handbook* and several dozen Necromancy spells that are not (DMs can create these additional spells as they see fit).

Poison (Su): Anyone stung by Orcus must make a Fortitude save (DC 33) or take 3d6 points of Constitution drain and 3d6 points of Charisma drain as their bodies shrivel and mummify. One minute later, the poisoned victim must make a second Fortitude saving throw (DC 33) or take another 3d6 points of Constitution drain.

Fear Gaze (Su): Causes victims to cower for 2d4 rounds, range 90 feet; Will save negates DC 31.

Call Undead (Sp): Orcus can automatically summon up to 100 Hit Dice of any type of undead creature per day. This is a move-equivalent action for the Demon Prince of Undead.

Call Tanar'ri (Sp): Once per hour, Orcus can automatically call 4d20 dretches; 2d6 succubi; 1d6 vrocks, hezrous, or glabrezus; 1d4 nalfeshnees or mariliths; or 1d2 balors. These demons are called, allowing them to use their summoning abilities. This is a standard action.

Create Spawn (Su): Anyone who is slain by Orcus's poison becomes a bodak under Orcus's control; this transformation takes 1 round. A body slain by other means but subsequently poisoned by Orcus' sting within an hour of its death must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 33) or arise as a bodak in 1 round as well; if the body makes the saving throw, it cannot be transformed into a bodak by further poisonings.

Wand of Orcus: As a free action, Orcus can call to his hand the *Wand of Orcus*, a potent artifact that appears as an obsidian wand capped with a human skull. In place of a slam attack, Orcus can make a melee touch attack with the Wand. Any living mortal creature struck by the Wand must make a Fortitude save (DC 33) or be instantly slain and transformed into a bodak. A successful saving throw merely deals 4d8+20 points of damage. As a standard action, Orcus can manifest this death attack as a 300-foot-long beam with a ranged touch attack. The *Wand of Orcus* has other powers as well; only Orcus knows the full capabilities of this artifact.

Grant Divine Spells (Su): As a demon prince, Orcus can grant divine spells to any mortal followers who become clerics and worship him devoutly. Orcus can grant access to the domains of Chaos, Death, Destruction, and Evil.

Speak With Dead (Su): Orcus can speak with dead as a 20th-level cleric at will.

True Seeing (Su): Orcus has *true seeing* active at all times; this ability cannot be dispelled.

Demon Prince and the *Scythe of Orcus* with it. When the dust settles, the pit is gone, replaced with the solid stone cave floor.

With the destruction of the *Deadgate*, the unnatural pall over the area vanishes. Any surviving simulacra die immediately, and all undead in the area flee at top speed, even into the sunlight if it is during the day. Any other minions of Eldrua leave as well; the party faces no opposition on the trek out of the Hold of Jarl Gnorgrak.

If the heroes do not manage to stop Eldrua in time and she manages to complete the *Deadgate*, things look grim. This particular *Deadgate* affects an area with a radius of 200 miles (engulfing nearly half of Sterich) as detailed in the *Deadgate* description at the end of the adventure. Vanquishing Eldrua once this occurs might be impossible for the heroes, and the longer they wait the worse things will get. Soon, people in the affected area are forced to flee, and Eldrua sets about the task of building an empire in Orcus's name. Defying such an empire could be the basis of an exciting high-level campaign.

Although there is plenty of treasure to be found in this adventure, there is no additional reward waiting for the characters once they return home. If they have done their part, the nation of Sterich (and indeed, all of the Flanaess) has been saved from a terrible doom, but no one but the party seems to have noticed.

This is not entirely true. The various deities of Oerth have noticed, and they applaud the accomplishment of the characters. A functional *Deadgate* steals souls from their rightful rewards in the afterlife, and the gods and goddesses can breathe easier now that it has been destroyed. If the party has not destroyed Eldrua's notes on the construction of *Deadgates*, they each begin to have recurring nightmares of a new *Deadgate* springing forth from the notes; these visions continue until the notes are destroyed.

If the PCs destroy the notes, they have truly and finally defeated Eldrua. The next time each of them sleeps, they receive a vision from their patron deities in which their gods or goddesses, disguised as something appropriate to the religion, thank them and grant them their fondest desire. Encourage each player to indicate what such a desire might be. Upon awakening, each character finds this desire has come true to a certain extent; their deity has granted the desire in the form of a *wish*. Consult the guidelines for this spell to determine how best to grant the character's *wish*.

Note that characters who do not have a patron deity should not be excluded from this reward; they too have dreams in which someone they love or trust from their past offers them a reward. In this case, the unknown benefactor is a long forgotten but still potent unnamed rival of Orcus who was just happy to see the enemy's plan's stymied once again. You can determine the exact nature of this benefactor, who might be a deity or simply a powerful mortal, as you see fit.

ENCOUNTER LEVEL CHART

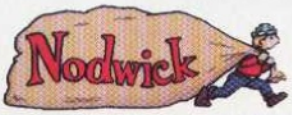
Summarized below are the Encounter Levels (EL) for all of the keyed encounters in "Headless."

Area	Encounter Description	EL
*	Spectres	varies
*	Wraiths	varies
2	Retrievers (3)	12
	with Hunters on Nightmares (4)	+3
6	Frost Giant Mohrgs (4)	13
7	Old White Dragon Simulacra (2)	14
8	Drusalakas, Male Death Slaad	14
9	Gnorgrak, Male Simulacrum Rgr3	
	with Frost Giant Mohrgs (3)	12
	with Hunters on Nightmares (4)	+3
12	Door Trap	8
12	Chosen of Kostchtchie, Male Half-Frost Giant/Half-Fiend Bbn1	12
13	Eldrua, Female Derro Ftr1/Wiz6/Lor7	
	with Nightmare Mount and Gnorgrak Simulacrum	15
	per Additional Hunter and Nightmare	+.5
	per Round of Gated Undead	+.5

* These are random encounters featuring a variable number of opponents.

On the darker side, for the rest of their lives the heroes are plagued by intermittent nightmares in which they awaken to find themselves dead and rotting away, unable to resist the unholy lure of a seductive call to commit nameless atrocities. These are the vengeful sendings of Orcus, and they can provide you with a springboard for further adventures against the Demon Prince of Undead. Perhaps his vengeance amounts to little more than a few nights of lost sleep, or perhaps Orcus has something special in mind for his newest enemies. Minions come and go, but the rage of a Demon Prince is forever. Ω

James notes: "The weird thing about writing this adventure was I had to do everything twice. I had to map out the Jarl's dungeon to fill half of it with rubble, and I had to stat out the original versions of the simulacrums before I could figure out the stats for the simulacrums themselves. So logically, I should be paid twice for this adventure, right Chris?"



by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com

TROUBLESOME INSECTS! YOUR HEADS WILL HELP TO FUEL THE DEADGATE... WELL, EXCEPT FOR YOUR HENCHMAN; HE'S A TAD HOMELY FOR MY PURPOSES.
I'D WORRY MORE ABOUT OUR CLERIC IF I WERE YOU. SHE'S ABOUT TO RUIN THE DEADGATE WITH HER SPEAK WITH DEAD SPELL.
FOOLISH HUMAN! HOW COULD THAT POSSIBLY HARM-
ALL TOGETHER NOW...
♪ I-I-I AIN'T GOT NO BAAAAHDY! ♪ NO BODY CARES FOR ME...♪
YOU'D BETTER SURRENDER BEFORE SHE WHIPS OUT HER "SACRED SWING" HYMN.

Rage

How Roughner Got His Rage Back

by J. Bradley Schell

artwork by Jason A. Engle • cartography by Christopher West

"Rage" is a short D&D adventure for four characters of 7th level. It can be easily modified for four characters of 6th to 8th level with little trouble using the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. A good balance of PCs is preferred, as there is a variety of challenges in the module, but good roleplaying will make the adventure that much more interesting to everyone involved.

Magic Items Monsters Non-Player Characters (NPCs) Objects Settlements Traps

Adventure Summary

"Rage" is an adventure about Roughner Goblincrusher, a 6th-level barbarian, until recently a successful individual enforcer of the peace at the edges of the Duchy of Bissel. If the DM is not using the Flanaess as the basis of his or her campaign, then this adventure can be set in any uncivilized hilly region with a semi-regularly traveled road. An evil deity of slaughter is also required to replace Erythnul.

In this adventure, the PCs encounter Roughner and learn how he was cursed by the mother of the troll he slew and how he set off to the troll matron's lair to lift the curse. The party must defeat the troll matron and her two remaining sons to free Roughner of his curse and give this untamed land its protector once more. Roughner's curse is caused by a new magic item called the *mirror of affliction,* which has trapped a piece of the mighty barbarian in the form of his rage. Ridding Roughner or the curse means finding and smashing the mirror.

Adventure Background

Roughner has spent the last several years of his life dedicated to the destruction of highway banditry—his tribal quest of manhood—and in his wanderings found himself far away from the regular haunts of his tribe. To tell the truth, his tribal quest was supposed to last only a single hunting season, but Roughner found that he enjoyed the travel and vicious fights so much that he never bothered to return.

Following a rumor that there were evil troll bandits in the area, Roughner traveled to this portion of the kingdom. Upon discovering the rumors were true, Roughner tracked and managed to dispatch an evil troll in horrific combat, casting its severed limbs into a bonfire until nothing was left of the foul beast but blackened bones.

A few days later, Roughner noticed something strange. He had stopped at an inn—a rough sort of place that any barbarian would find comfortable while carousing and debauching—for a meal and some entertainment. Yet the usual activities held little satisfaction, and by the end of the evening, Roughner found himself with a cup of dry sherry contemplating life's mysteries in front of the fireplace, while his serving maid of choice went off with the local tough.

A few days later, Roughner noticed that his voice was losing its depth and timber, climbing a full octave higher. His diction lost its rough hew, and he found himself interested in the more sedate activities of daily living. Despite his best efforts, Roughner could no longer work up the berserker's rage that held him such good stead in combat before. In fact, his combat style could almost be described as "dainty." Even Roughner could tell that he was clearly under a curse.

Roughner soon discovered that he had been cursed in quite a unique way. Bworkata the Horrible, the mother of the highwayman troll whose skull Roughner so jauntily wears, is a priestess of Erythnul (or another appropriate god of evil if you use a different pantheon in your campaign). In a vision, Erythnul led Bworkata to discover a *mirror of affliction,* an item that would enable her to gain a measure of revenge. Death was too good for Roughner, in Bworkata's opinion. She wanted to humiliate the barbarian by taking away those aspects of his life in which he took the most joy.

After quaffing a *potion of invisibility,* Bworkata crept into Roughner's camp and placed the mirror within view of the barbarian so he would see it first thing upon awakening. When the barbarian awoke, she quickly spoke the command word and quietly made off into the wilderness. Roughner attributed the experience of waking up to his own face first thing in the morning to the after-effects of too much ale the night before and went on his way. Unknown to him at the time, the *mirror of affliction* had enabled Bworkata to capture and imprison Roughner's rage. As a result, Roughner can no longer access this class ability, although the rest of his abilities remain in place. Bworkata, for her part, keeps the mirror in a prominent spot on the wall of her den.

Roughner, however, is not one to take a curse lying down. He is, after all, an accomplished barbarian. Recognizing he was under the influence of some sort of powerful magic, the barbarian sought out Captain Hewn Stonetow, a retired adventuring priest of St. Cuthbert, whom Roughner knew from previous adventures. After an expensive casting of the *divination* spell, Roughner received the only answer Captain Stonetow could give him: Seek the progenitor of the charred one. She holds the reflection you seek.

Spending his final reserves of ready gold, Roughner sought out Graceth, a sage in Pellak (the capital of Bissel) who specialized in solving riddles. Graceth was able to help him interpret the *divination* (thanks in part to the obviously charred skull Roughner still carried about.) Roughner immediately returned to the hills where he first encountered the highwayman troll. He searched the area for quite some time (blundering about like the frustrated civilized man he has become) before coming across the trolls' lair, where Bworkata the Horrible lives with her remaining two sons. Recognizing that he had no chance to storm the lair in his current condition, Roughner has returned to the nearby road to seek assistance from a group of fellow travelers.

For the Players

The rough ruts and hilly countryside fit the man on side of the road ahead. He doesn't look civilized. The man (if he is human) is wearing thick furs over heavy chainmail, and a large blackened skull from some large humanoid or giant adorns his battle-weary helm. He stands clearly over 6 feet tall, and his great club is cocked at an arrogant angle to one side in a ready but unthreatening position. Once you're within hailing distance, this mountain-man cries out in a high-pitched, cultured voice, "Ho there, fellow travelers! Have you a brief moment to discuss the conundrum I've found myself in? I'd be most grateful."

If the PCs stop, Roughner will be overly solicitous, eagerly laughing at the weakest jest and agreeing with the most outrageous statements. He is desperate, and he sees the party as a way to help him break the curse. He engages them in conversation, hoping that they will ask the important question—what is he doing standing by the side of the road? Once they do, he regales them with his tale (as told in the "Adventure Background"), holding nothing back, answering any questions with polite truthfulness, and then asking them directly, "What say you then, chaps? Willing to have a go at taking the horrid beast in her lair? What, what?"

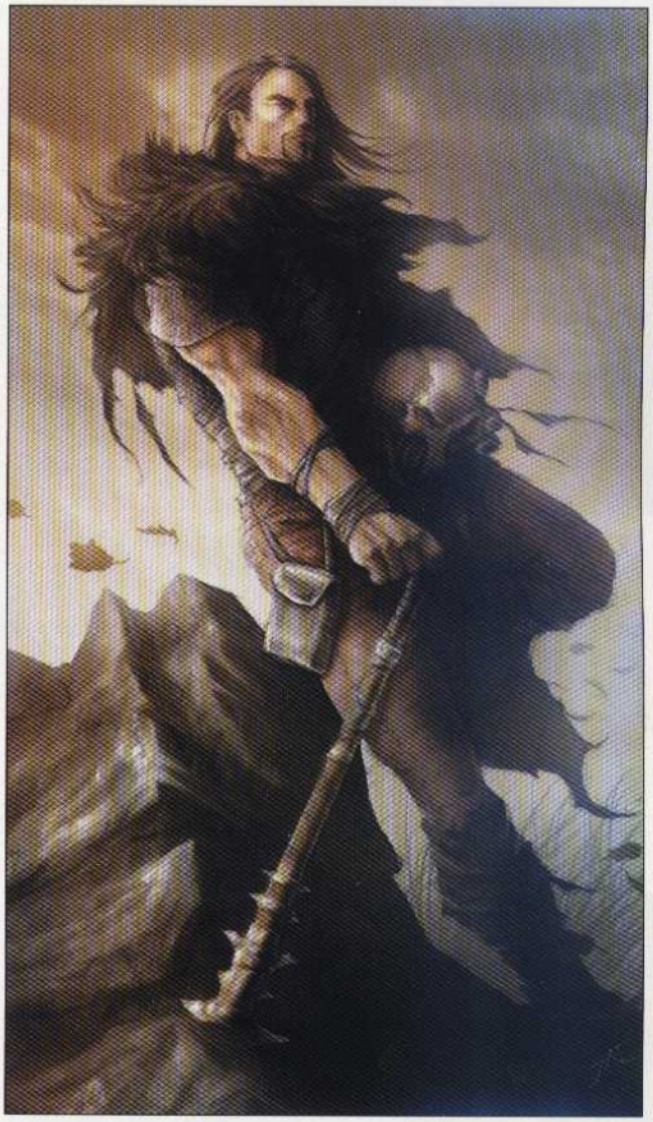
Roughner can offer little in the way of reward for the PCs' assistance, as he has spent all of his wealth seeking the source of his curse. However, Roughner is happy to offer the PCs whatever treasure they can find in the trolls' lair, with the exception of whatever is responsible for his current state.

Should the PCs agree to help, Roughner is ecstatic. He quickly leads them to the trolls' lair, approximately one and a half miles east of where Roughner encountered the PCs. Should the PCs look behind the bushes on the side of the road opposite Roughner, they discover the remains of a large bonfire. This is where Roughner disposed of the troll bandit.

Roughner Goblincrusher, Male Human Bbn6: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 6d12+12; hp 54; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 armor, +2 Dex); Atks +12/+7 (1d10+6, *+2 greatclub*); SA rage 2/day (currently unavailable), fast movement, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +4, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +1, Wilderness Lore +8; *Feats:* Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Possessions: +2 Greatclub, masterwork chainmail, trollskull helm, fur clothes and cloak (120 gp value), waterskin, skinning knife, flint and steel, 50-foot hemp rope.



1. Troll Lair Entrance.

The entrance to the troll lair is a dark semicircle in a 20-foot-high limestone cliff. Pale blue smoke seeps out of the cave entrance, dissipating in the wind once it passes the crown of the hill. The cave is approximately 9 feet wide and 10 feet tall and extends back at least 30 feet until its depths become lost in darkness.

As the PCs move to enter, have each of them make a Spot check (DC 10). If they are successful, read the following:

Suspended from the ceiling is a heavy metal grate, rusty spikes poking downward. The grate is 10 feet wide and 10 feet long. The area directly under the grate is covered with what are obviously multiple pressure plates, making it impossible to walk across this initial stretch of floor without stepping on at least one of the plates.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure can be run for groups of 5th to 9th level with little difficulty using the following simple modifications:

5th- to 6th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written but with the following changes:

- Consider replacing one of the trolls with two or three ogre servants.
- Lower Bworkata's cleric level to 3rd.
- Reduce the amount of treasure by 20% and remove Bworkata's *rod of negation.*

8th- to 9th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written but with the following changes:

- Give Bworkata a hill giant husband.
- Add another troll son.
- Increase the amount of treasure by 20%, with an additional minor magic item.

Directly to the left of the cavern entrance, just before where the grate spans the corridor's ceiling, is a small alcove, 2 feet deep and about 18 inches round. At the end of the alcove can be seen a thick metal lever. A similarly shaped alcove seems to exist some 10 feet down from the cavern entrance on the same wall.

Trap (EL 5): The trolls rely on the grate trap to defend their lair. Built by some delicious goblins and Bworkata's highwayman sons, this trap has been highly effective in catching both intelligent and unintelligent marauders. If someone attempts to walk across the floor beneath the grate without first pulling the lever in the alcove, the grate falls, dealing damage to any underneath it. The clatter also alerts the trolls in area 2. Pulling the lever in the alcove deactivates the falling grate trap for 1 minute (10 rounds), after which the lever resets.

The exterior lever is guarded by a guillotine blade trap that springs whenever the lever is pulled. The blade takes 5 minutes to reset. The trolls are not discouraged by the guillotine trap and take advantage of their natural regenerative abilities to simply re-attach their severed hands after pulling the lever.

The alcove deeper in the lair also contains a lever that temporarily turns off the grate trap. However, it is untrapped.

Note: Any loud or extended noise draws the trolls from area 2. They do not alert Bworkata, as she typically claims the best parts of anything for herself.

Falling Grate Trap: CR 3; 10 feet by 10 feet; 5d6 points of damage), Reflex save for half (DC 19); Search (DC 10); Disable Device (DC 25).

Lever Guillotine Trap: CR 2; +15 melee (4d4, crit ×3), Search (DC 29), Disable Device (DC 30).

2. Trolls' Common Area.

A thick stench pervades this 30 foot by 30 foot cavern. Many bones lie scattered around the edges of the room, with clear walking paths weaving through the debris. Three piles of dirt, crushed stone, broken tree limbs, and tattered cloth, each some 7 feet wide, dominate the center of this noisome chamber. The faint reddish glow of a low fire flutters in from the entrance to another chamber to the northeast, while a 5-foot-wide black hole in the eastern wall suggests another room or alcove in that direction.

The nests are horrible, nasty places where the trolls spend their time when not out ravaging the countryside. The third nest belonged to the troll that Roughner killed. The bones are from a variety of humanoids and animals.

The black hole in the eastern wall leads to a small 5-foot diameter alcove, which contains yet more trash and offal. There is nothing of value in it.

Creatures (EL 7): Bworkata's two remaining sons lair in this cavern. They mostly lounge around this room, playing their favorite game, "Guess the Bone," and waiting for their mother to tell them what to do. If the grate trap in area 1 is set off, they come to investigate. If the trolls engage the party in combat, Bworkata investigates from area 3 in 4 rounds.

Trolls (2): hp 72 each; *Monster Manual* 180.

Treasure: PCs making a successful Search check (DC 15) of the three nests uncover 650 gp, 3 garnets (100 gp each), and a *+2 cloak of resistance.*

3. Bworkata's Den.

A low fire burns under a 5-foot-tall iron cauldron in the center of this 20-foot-deep cave. Inside, you see a thick yellow goo bubbling merrily. A huge wooden spoon hangs from a hook above the cauldron. Also suspended from the ceiling are many foul-smelling herbs and the desiccated corpses of small, unidentifiable creatures.

In the northern corner of the chamber rests a small altar draped in black, with a thick human skull resting on it, an evil holy symbol smeared in thick red lines atop the skull. Crudely drawn on the wall above the altar is a massive troll

NEW MAGIC ITEM

Mirror of Affliction

The *mirror of affliction* is foul item created to exact revenge on one's enemies. When activated, the mirror casts a twice-heightened *bestow curse* spell on its victim. This curse cannot be dispelled normally by *dispel magic* or *break enchantment,* but a *limited wish, wish,* or *miracle* spell targeted on the cursed victim alleviates the effects of the curse. The only other way to break the curse is to break the mirror. A *mirror of affliction* has a hardness of 1 and 1 hit point.

To activate the mirror, the bearer must first force the victim to gaze into its surface so she can see her own reflection. The wielder then speaks a command word followed by the specific curse he wishes to place on the victim. The unfortunate individual must then make a Will saving throw (DC 17) to avoid the effects of the curse; failure indicates the curse takes effect as desired by the bearer of the mirror. Once a *mirror of affliction* has been used, it holds the curse, as well as the victim's frozen reflection, until the effect is lifted. Before its activation, it looks like an ordinary hand mirror, usually set in a simple frame of stone, glass, or wood. A *mirror of affliction* can never be used more than once.

Rumors circulate from time to time of more powerful versions of the *mirror of affliction* that can curse multiple individuals or be used repeatedly on multiple victims, but making such a mirror would be significantly more difficult and costly.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Heightened *bestow curse; Market Price:* 2,250 gp; *Cost to Create:* 1,125 gp + 90 XP.

with a great morningstar at the ready, glaring across the room. Attached to the wall with a leather thong at approximately belt level to this figure is what appears to be a lifelike, surprised portrait of a familiar-looking barbarian painted on a mirror and set in a plain wooden frame. A pile of dirt and filthy blankets against the south wall serves as a nest.

The iron cauldron bubbles with enough liquid to make three *potions of bull's strength*. If the liquid is imbibed from the cauldron without allowing it to cool, it causes 1d6 points of heat damage going down.

The altar is dedicated to Erythnul; the drawing is Bworkata's best attempt at depicting the god. The mirror is a *mirror of affliction* (see the New Magic Item sidebar), the device Bworkata used to steal Roughner's rage. It can be easily pulled off the hook on the wall.

Creatures (EL 10): Unless drawn into combat elsewhere, Bworkata is here. The troll cleric has green skin and stands 9 feet tall. Her prominent fangs are yellow and her black eyes are bloodshot around the rims. Her gray hair is long and greasy. She wears a bloodstained white dress, now dingy with age and misuse.

Bworkata is willing to parley when confronted by dangerous interlopers, speaking in heavily accented Common. Dealing with her can be a tricky business, for although she isn't brilliant, she is quite cunning and difficult to fool. She will not hesitate to use her *potion of detect thoughts* to ensure the trustworthiness of any bargaining. Any hint of trickery causes her to fly into a rage and attack. She parts with Roughner's rage for no less than 3,000 gp in trade (she hates the barbarian, but the son he killed wasn't her favorite anyway). She does not parley with anyone who has permanently destroyed her two remaining sons.

Bworkata the Horrible, Female Troll Clr5: CR 10; Large Giant (9 ft. tall); HD 6d8+36 (troll) plus 5d8+30 (cleric); hp 138; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 natural, +2 shield, +1 *bracers of armor*); +12 melee (1d6+6, 2 claws) and +7 melee (1d6+3, bite), or +13/+8 melee (1d8+8, masterwork morningstar); Reach 10 ft.; SA rend (2d6+9), spells, rebuke undead; SQ regeneration 5, scent, darkvision 90 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 23, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills: Concentration +14, Listen +8, Spellcraft +8, Spot +8; *Feats:* Alertness, Brew Potion, Iron Will, Power Attack.

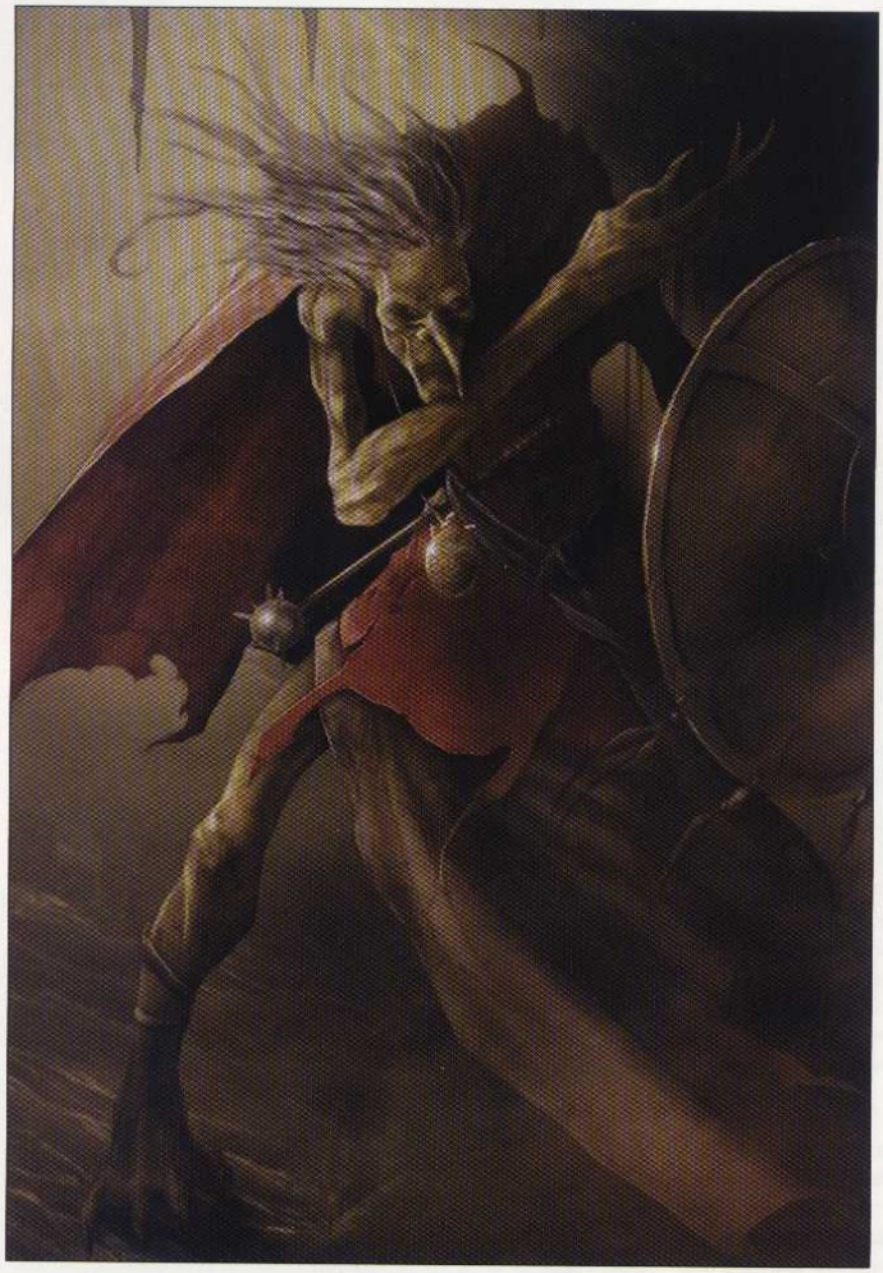
Spells Prepared (5/4+1/3+1/1+1; base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance, resistance;* 1st—*cause fear, command, cure light wounds, doom, magic weapon*;* 2nd—*aid, hold person, resist elements, invisibility*;* 3rd—*magic vestment*, prayer.*

*Domain spell. *Domains:* War (free proficiency and Weapon Focus with deity's favored weapon), Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

Possessions: +1 bracers of armor, rod of negation (40 charges), *potion of love, potion of detect thoughts,* large steel shield, masterwork morningstar, iron key (to locked chest—see **Treasure** below).

Tactics: If Bworkata can, prior to entering combat, she casts *resist elements* (fire), *aid, prayer, magic vestment* (on her shield), and *magic weapon* on her morningstar, then follows up with a *spiritual weapon* that she sends ahead of her into combat. Before she charges in, however, she casts *invisibility* on herself and tries to maneuver to strike any obvious followers of rival good gods.

If she enters combat between her sons and the PCs, which is likely unless the characters take precautions to avoid alerting her, she also casts *detect magic* before entering the room so as to pinpoint possible targets for her *rod of negation.* She saves her *invisibility* spell for use later if at least one of her sons is still standing and drawing the majority of attacks when she enters the melee. This allows her to use the *rod of negation* from the back of the cave. She keeps the *rod of negation*



in a sheath built into the back of her shield for ready access, and she uses it against any magic items she can detect.

Bworkata wields a heavy morningstar in one hand and carries a large steel shield in the other during a battle, but she won't hesitate to use her claws if she is disarmed.

Treasure: In addition to the equipment that Bworkata carries, the potions in the cauldron, and the *mirror of affliction* containing Roughner's rage, there is a locked 3-foot square chest underneath the altar—the small iron key that Bworkata holds unlocks it. Within the chest are 2,300 gp.

Lifting the Curse

If Roughner is with the party when they reach area 3, he sees the mirror and is puzzled by its presence. He avoids combat and is subsequently ignored by the trolls unless the PCs fall. It takes him 1d4+2 rounds to realize that this is the item he seeks, at which point he tries to seize the mirror (taking attacks of opportunity from the trolls). If a PC figures out the clue sooner and points it out to Roughner, he immediately moves to seize the mirror. His first action after grabbing the item is to smash it against the floor of the cave, dealing 1d6+3 points of damage to it. The curse dissipates after 1 round. In addition, the effete side-effects of the curse vanish, lowering Roughner's voice to its normal baritone and reducing his diction to a series of grunts, one-word sentences, and war cries.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs successfully recover the *mirror of affliction* and restore Roughner's rage, the barbarian is very grateful. The effects of the mirror's destruction are obvious (as noted above), and Roughner quickly moves off to continue his personal life quest once the trolls are defeated. Note that if the party has brokered a deal with Bworkata at this point (and she is still in the cave), Roughner immediately rages and attacks her.

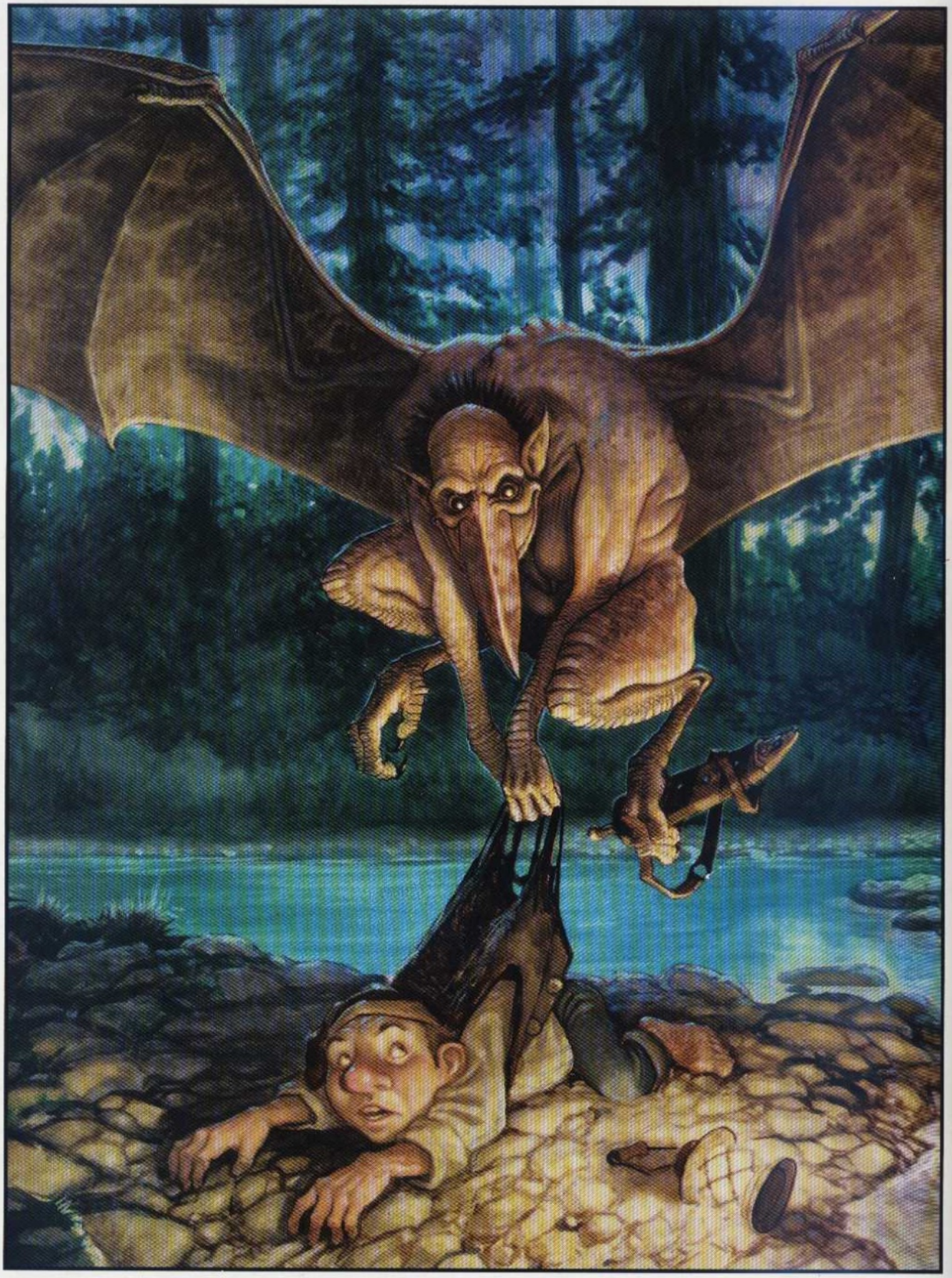
If the heroes purchase the mirror from Bworkata and prevent Rougher from attacking her, six weeks after the adventure Roughner sends them 500 gp as a token reimbursement. If Bworkata is still alive at that time, Roughner seeks out companions for an expedition to slay her. Bworkata won't wait for the expedition, moving her family and her lair many miles away within a single day.

Continuing the Adventure

If Bworkata survives, she continues to plot against Roughner, but now she holds a grudge against the characters for disrupting her carefully planned revenge. She spreads the word among other servants of Erythnul, and the PCs might find the god of slaughter's minions attempting to thwart them at every turn. Even if the trolls are slain, the PCs have still gained an enemy of the church of Erythnul.

Whether or not all the enemies are vanquished in the course of the adventure, the PCs have made a lasting friend of Roughner. It's entirely likely, if not probable, that he drags the characters into further mishaps or adventures as he becomes embroiled in them. Ω

After a long hiatus, Brad is happy to once again have enough time to submit to DUNGEON Magazine. *His previous d'alliance with trolls was the light-hearted swamp romp, "Troll of the Fens" (Issue #40). If you have any feedback, feel free to contact Brad directly at btsschellhouse@yahoo.com.*



Wedding Bells

Ding Dong in Dockalong

by Jonathan Tweet

artwork by Tony DiTerlizzi • cartography by Christopher West

"Wedding Bells" is a town-based, character-oriented D&D adventure for four 4th-level characters. Since the action mostly involves interacting with NPCs instead of slaying monsters, you'll only need to adjust a few encounters to let a more or less powerful group play this adventure. It works best for a group of characters that have proven themselves to be a cut above the average person but who haven't made yet made their names as renowned heroes (or reviled villains). Characters that can interact peaceably with NPCs get more out of the adventure than inveterate troublemakers.

Magic Items Monsters Non-Player Characters (NPCs) Objects Settlements Traps

Adventure Background

Dockalong is a small town. If it's not typical, neither is it extraordinary. Sheriff Savil does a fine job of keeping the peace, although trouble appears from time to time. Currently, one such source of trouble is a satyr that's hanging around town.

Here's what the townsfolk know about the satyr:

Nine years ago, a human townsman found an infant satyr in the woods, near his slain parents (they had been killed by gnolls). The townsman, Garto Fenista, named him Laggo and adopted the infant into his family. Laggo grew up as the joy of the town, a precocious, curious, charming child. Everyone in the town knew him, and most doted on him.

Within a few years, however, Laggo became too much to handle. He grew faster than even a human child, and he became wilder as he matured. At age 7, Laggo was fully grown, although the townsfolk still treated him as a child, or as a clown. Laggo found himself constantly in conflict with various townsfolk, sometimes breaking out into fistfights. Finally, a year ago, Laggo committed certain indiscretions (use your imagination) that got him kicked out of town. Sheriff Savil exiled him, partly to keep him from disturbing the peace, but partly to keep him from getting badly hurt or even killed by an angry mob.

Having grown up in town, Laggo is unsure of himself in the wilderness that would normally be his home. Rather than set off to make his way in the world, he's hung around Dockalong, sometimes causing trouble, sometimes trying to curry favor with his former friends.

Here's what the townsfolk don't know about the satyr:

Laggo is angry, resentful, and hurt. Some days he'd like to burn Dockalong to the ground. Other days he wants to save it in some heroic display that will make the townspeople love him. (The fey are notoriously emotional.) Mostly, he's lonely.

Lately, however, he's been less lonely. Several weeks ago, he met a harpy named Arekla. Arekla enjoys Laggo's pipe music, and Laggo is (literally) captivated by Arekla's song. As two lone misfits, they've come to like each other, maybe even love each other. Given the harpy's chaotic evil bent, it's only a matter of time before Laggo bores or offends her and she destroys him. In the meantime, Laggo is close to happy. Laggo knows the harpy is evil, but he tries not to think about it.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs attend a wedding at the remote, small town of Dockalong. When a harpy abducts a townsman, only one person knows where the harpy lives: Laggo, the satyr raised as a human. If the characters win his trust, he leads them to the harpy. If they don't, the captive townsman, and perhaps more innocents, die horrible deaths at the harpy's hands.

The adventure starts with the characters making preparations to travel to Dockalong for a wedding. Their route takes them through the wilderness, where they are ambushed by elite gnolls. (These gnolls have special gear they've received from the harpy.)

Further along the route to Dockalong, the PCs encounter peasants and townsfolk, including a search party looking for a young halfling man who's apparently run off to a rendezvous with his girlfriend.

Without further complications, the party arrives in Dockalong. If the party includes evil or dangerous PCs, they face trouble with the locals. Even if none of them are evil or dangerous, the locals are at least suspicious. Before the wedding, the PCs have ample opportunity to explore the town and interact with townsfolk.

The girlfriend of the missing man then shows up without him, making the search for the missing halfling much more urgent. The PCs are liable to want to participate in the search in some way. They might or might not find out that the man's been abducted by a harpy.

Most likely, the halfling has not yet been found when the wedding takes place. At the feast after the wedding, the PCs

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Depending on the PC party level, you might want to adjust the combat encounters in "Wedding Bells."

Effective Party Level: First, determine the PCs' Effective Party Level. The Effective Party Level is based on the average level and the number of PCs in the party. For example, a party with six or seven PCs is about 50% tougher than the average party of four PCs, so it can take on challenges 50% tougher (that is, 1 Encounter Level higher).

Party Size	Effective Party Level
1	level - 4
2	level - 2
3	level - 1
4-5	level +0
6-7	level +1
8-11	level +2
12+	level +3

Gnoll Ambush: Since this is a single encounter (rather than one in a series), it should be 2 Encounter Levels above the PCs' Effective Party Level.

Effective Party Level	Encounter Level	Gnolls
2	4	gnoll ranger + standard gnoll
3	5	2 elite gnolls
4	6	3 elite gnolls
5	7	4 elite gnolls
6	8	4 elite gnolls + 4 standard gnolls

Harpy: Since this is a single encounter and the PCs have a good chance to be forewarned of the harpy's identity, it should be 3 Encounter levels above the PCs' Effective Party Level.

Effective Party Level	EL	Encounter	Treasure
2	5	standard harpy + 1 elite gnoll	half listed; for each item, delete it on a roll of 01-50 on d%
3	6	standard harpy + 2 elite gnolls	as above
4	7	half-fiendish harpy Clr1	normal
5	8	half-fiendish harpy Clr2	add an obsidian (8 gp), 2 flasks of alchemist's fire (which Arekla might use in combat), and two scrolls (*flame blade* and *hold animal*)
6	9	half-fiendish harpy Clr2 + 3 elite gnolls	as above

Elite gnolls are Arekla's allies and temporary guardians. She sings to them each day until they become inured to her song (that is, until each makes its saving throw). That way, she can use her song in a fight and not affect the gnolls.

To change Arekla from Clr1 to Clr2, give her the following statistics to replace those in her description: HD 9; hp 47; +13 melee (claws), +3 melee (bite), +5 Fort save, +10 Will save, +2 Spellcraft, +2 Concentration; new feat Weapon Finesse (claw), new spell-like ability *contagion* 1/day, 1 additional 0-level and one additional 1st-level spell per day.

An alternative way to calculate Effective Party Level is:

Effective Party Level: First, determine the PCs' Effective Party Level. The Effective Party Level is 4 less than what the party's Encounter Level would be if they were NPCs. For example, two 5th-level PCs and three 4th-level PCs would be Encounter Level 9, so their Effective Party Level is 5.

get more opportunities to interact with the townsfolk, including challenging them in various games of skill and prowess.

The satyr, Laggo, interrupts the party, looking to cause trouble or to endear himself to the townsfolk. If the PCs know enough and deal squarely with Laggo, they might get him to betray the harpy. If they bungle the encounter with Laggo, they have little hope of finding the missing townsman alive.

If the PCs learn where the harpy lives, they can fight her and (if they win) rescue the captive. They are celebrated as heroes in Dockalong. If the satyr helped them, he might use the situation as a way to prove his worth and regain the good graces of the townsfolk.

If the PCs don't learn where the harpy lives, they eventually find the missing man. He's very dead, lodged in the harpy's abandoned nest. She snatches another townsperson, and the hunt is on again.

Character Hooks

Use one of these hooks or invent your own:

- The brother or sister of a PC is getting married. (This is the default hook, and the text of the adventure supports it. Adjust the details if you use a different hook.) The PC's family naturally expects the PC to attend. As a successful adventurer, the PC is regarded as a source of pride in the family, and the family wants the PC's companions there, as well. For the other PCs, it's an opportunity to take a break from adventuring. (Plus, weddings are great places to meet someone special.) This hook requires you and the player in question to develop details about the PC's family, if those details haven't been fleshed out yet. It's an opportunity to give the PC more depth. The two NPCs that are getting married are most likely human, elven, or half-elven, so a human, elven, half-elven, or half-orc PC could be related to one or the other of them.
- One of the PCs is getting married. The betrothed couple has decided to go back to the lover's hometown of Dockalong for the wedding. The rest of the PCs are going along (for the party, if nothing else). Some other PCs are likely to get (or expect) places of honor in the wedding party. You probably need to juggle some details to make this work, but it's the best hook if you can pull it off.
- If none of the PCs works as a bride or groom, or even as the sibling of a bride or groom, you can surely dream up some connection; a friend, a mentor, a colleague, or an ex-lover is getting married.
- While traveling for some unrelated purpose, the PCs are ambushed by elite gnolls, who are using special gear they received from a harpy. The PCs learn about the harpy from the gnolls (such as by way of *speak with dead*), and they head toward Dockalong looking for her. By coincidence, they arrive in the area just as the harpy's captured a townsman. (This hook

THE WORD ON DOCKALONG

The PCs might already know or might be able to find out basic information about Dockalong. PCs can make Knowledge checks as soon as they hear of Dockalong and its location. The DCs for the Gather Information checks are for attempts in Dockalong itself. If the PCs are in settlements near Dockalong, the DCs for Gather Information checks are 5 points higher. If the PCs are in more distant settlements (presumably their homes), the DCs are 10 points higher.

Skill and DC	Information
Gather Information (DC 5)	The people of Dockalong are mostly human, with substantial elven and halfling populations.
Knowledge (geography) (DC 10) or Gather Information (DC 10)	Dockalong is in the "buffer zone" around the elven woods. Here, non-elves are allowed to live in nearly autonomous settlements, under elven rule.
Knowledge (history) (DC 10) or Gather Information (DC 10)	An ancient civilization had extensive settlements in the area.
Knowledge (nobility and royalty) (DC 15) or Gather Information (DC 15)	The lord of the area is a young elf who has not yet distinguished himself in any particular way.
Gather Information (DC 15)	Sheriff Savil is a competent, honest ruler.
Int (DC 15) (Rogue or member of a thieves' guild only)	It would be exceptional for the local thieves' guild not to have a presence there.
Gather Information (DC 20)	Black marketeers meet in or around Dockalong.
Gather Information (DC 25)	Black marketeers meet on the far side of the island in the lake.
Gather Information (DC 25)	A bard reports to Sheriff Savil. (If the PC is in Dockalong, this check also reveals the bard's name: Willon Evesimere.)

means that you will need to juggle the order of events and encounters.)

• The PCs come to Dockalong to investigate nearby ruins. While in town, the PCs explore the "Dungeon of the Fire Opal" (see *Dungeon Magazine* #84). Some events in this adventure (such as confronting the sheriff's bodyguard at the town's entrance) happen when the PCs first arrive in Dockalong. Others don't happen until the PCs have finished exploring the Dungeon of the Fire Opal. The wedding could be between people that the PCs get to know while in town, or between a PC and someone the PC has met in town. (This hook lets lower-level PCs gain some experience before facing off with a half-fiendish harpy cleric.)

• If you don't want a full-blown dungeon as the lure to get the PCs to Dockalong, you can surely dream up some other attraction. For instance, there are ruins in the area, and the PCs might have some special purpose to visit them. If all else fails, the PCs can just be passing through as the events of the adventure take place.

Setting Features

Unless you have other ideas, this is the time and place of the wedding.

Time: The wedding is on Freeday the 7th of Goodmonth (the middle of high summer, when crops are growing). Freeday is a traditional day of rest. Characters probably want to arrange to arrive on the 6th, so they'll set out early in Goodmonth.

Place: Dockalong, in the elven borderlands. The elves rule a large, forested land, and all around that territory they maintain a "buffer zone." Here nonelves are welcome to settle, provided they follow elven law, defend their territory from invaders, and pay taxes to the elves.

Moonlight: As some events might happen at night, it makes a difference whether there's moonlight. In the first week of Goodmonth, Luna (the larger moon) is waning. It rises in the middle of the night and sets in the middle of the day. Celene, the smaller moon, is nearly new. It rises just before dawn and sets just ahead of the sun.

Town Features: Most of the action takes place in the small town of Dockalong. The buildings there are primarily built of broad, rough timbers (since wood is plentiful in the area). Most streets are more or less dirt tracks that wind among the buildings. Since space is readily available, the buildings tend to be low and spaced further apart than buildings in most towns of Dockalong's size. Beneath the town are the foundations of an ancient, ruined city. In some places, these remnants are visible, such as a few stretches of straight, paved road, and the stone foundations and ground floors of some buildings.

Wedding Preparations

Depending on which hook you're using, details vary, but probably the PCs get news of the wedding and have some time to prepare. Among the preparations they might want to make are:

• Buy gifts. This is a fine time to point out that even low-level PCs often have wealth far in excess of what common folk have. If the PCs buy gifts that are too cheap, they'll be seen as stingy. If they buy gifts that are too expensive, they'll be seen as show-offs. (Just what qualifies as "too cheap" and "too expensive" depends on your campaign and your judgment.)

• Buy outfits. Even if you're not in a wedding, you should look nice if you attend one. Showing up in the battered armor that you've been wearing since 2nd level isn't a great idea.

• Gear up. The route to Dockalong is overland, up into the hills, and through the wilderness. The PCs might want mounts or vehicles (if they don't have them already).

• Bachelor/bachelorette party. If one of the PCs is getting married, the other PCs might want to throw a party with local friends before they all leave for Dockalong.

The PCs should set out so as to reach Dockalong at least

WHAT'S AN ADVENTURER?

What does it mean to be an adventurer? How do the everyday people of the world see experienced adventurers, people with great power and wealth, often with no allegiance to any temple or crown? Are adventurers popular heroes? Feared bullies? Misunderstood outsiders? Threats to the establishment? Are they envied? Hated? Adored?

In this adventure, your players get to see their own characters from the perspectives of commoners. It's also an opportunity for you to decide, in your campaign, how the common people see adventurers. You can skew the NPCs and encounters to establish the social role that adventurers fill in your campaign, whether you want them to be treated like rock stars or gangsters (or gangster rock stars).

Also, decide for yourself how common "adventurers" are in your campaign. In the default D&D campaign, they're common enough that commoners can talk about "adventurers" as a group or type but rare enough that they're special when they show up. They're something like professional musicians in the real world: rare but not unheard of, with a few "hitting the big time" and most not getting that far. Some DMs run campaigns in which adventurers are as common as teachers in the real world, while others run campaigns in which adventurers are as rare as RPG designers. The rarer adventurers are in your campaign, the bigger a deal the PCs' arrival is to the people of Dockalong.

The players, however, won't know that this adventure is about society and their characters' place in it. On the surface, it's a mystery. The PCs meet a strange satyr who could be an ally or enemy, and they have to follow the clues to the lair of a frightening enemy—a half-fiendish harpy cleric.

one day before the wedding. The action runs smoothest if the PCs allot no extra time at Dockalong before the wedding, but if they want to leave early to get to the town early, that's up to them. If you don't want it to be up to them, roll some dice in secret and invent obstacles (bad weather, a bridge destroyed by a tunneling umber hulk) that put the PCs behind schedule, making them arrive the day before the wedding.

Gnoll Ambush

The purpose of this encounter is to provide an action scene early in the adventure. If your group is like most, a rousing melee gets their attention and serves as a good start to adventure. On the other hand, this encounter is only tangentially connected to the plot. It wouldn't be a problem for you to:

1. Skip the encounter.
2. Replace it with an encounter with your favorite monsters, minions of the PCs' archenemy, and so on.
3. Give the gnolls a motive related to your campaign (such as making them minions of the PCs' archenemy).

Set-Up

This encounter assumes that the characters are traveling along the road toward Dockalong. If the PCs are taking an unorthodox route, such as upriver or on a flying carpet, you'll need to adapt the ambush, ditch it, or replace it with one that works.

Travel Costs: On horseback, the PCs need to travel at least three days to get to Dockalong, one day through the rural land, one day along a road through the wilderness, and one day through the settled lands near Dockalong. If you make players bother with costs this petty, you can have the players pay 1 gp each plus 1 gp per mount for each day of travel. (Characters traveling in style can pay more.)

The following text assumes that the PCs are leaving a civilized land and traveling into the hinterlands:

> You have traveled out of the settled lands, through successively more open and rural areas. In front of you rose higher and higher hills. You spent one last night in civilization, and this morning you plan to follow the road west out of the farmlands and into hilly, wooded wilderness.

Give the players an opportunity now to determine what spells the PCs have prepared, ask questions about what lies ahead, try to get information from locals, or use their last day in civilization however they like. Also determine their marching order for travel on the road. Once they're ready, proceed.

Ambush

> The road has become rougher, narrower, and steeper, but it's still passable. By late morning, you're well above the farmlands behind you.

Creatures (EL 6): Three elite gnolls are waiting to ambush travelers. The elite gnolls are: a gnoll (male ranger) wearing a chain shirt with a mighty composite longbow; a gnoll (female barbarian) in a chain shirt wielding a two-handed flail; and a nearly naked gnoll (male sorcerer) whose fur is painted with strange, dark designs.

Durza, Male Gnoll Rgr1: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (gnoll) (7 ft. tall); HD 2d8+4 (gnoll) plus 1d10+2 (Rgr); hp 24; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +1 natural), flat-footed 15, touch 12; Atk +6 melee (1d8+4, light flail), or +4 melee (1d8+4, light flail) and +4 melee (1d6+2, handaxe), or +4 ranged (1d8+4/crit ×3, masterwork composite longbow); SA favored enemy (humans); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Animal Empathy -1, Listen +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +2. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Power Attack.

Possessions: Chain shirt, mighty masterwork composite longbow [+4] with 20 arrows, light flail, handaxe.

Kretch, Female Gnoll Bbn1: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (gnoll) (7 1/2 ft. tall); HD 2d8+4 (gnoll) plus 1d12+2 (Bbn); hp 25; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +1 natural), flat-footed 15, touch 12; Atk +7 melee (1d10+6, heavy flail), or +4 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, longbow); SA rage; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 19, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Intimidate +1, Listen +4, Spot +4. *Feats:* Power Attack, Cleave.

Possessions: Chain shirt, masterwork heavy flail, longbow with 20 arrows, *potion of bull's strength.*

Ohako, Male Gnoll Sor1: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (gnoll) (7 1/2 ft. tall); HD 2d8+4 (gnoll) plus 1d4+2 (Sor); hp 21; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural), flat-footed 11, touch 12; Atk +2 melee (1d10+1, greatclub), or +3 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, longbow); SA spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Listen +4, Spellcraft +0, Spot +4. *Feats:* Power Attack, Dodge.

Possessions: Wand of burning hands (2nd level, 21 charges), scroll of *invisibility* (3rd level), greatclub, longbow with 20 arrows, spell component pouch.

Spells Prepared (5/4; base DC = 11 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, flare, ray of frost, read magic;* 1st—*color spray, mage armor.*

If you need a fourth gnoll (for an EL 7 encounter) add a female gnoll druid wearing hide armor with a scimitar and wooden shield, plus a hyena animal companion nearby.

Eshekla, Female Gnoll Drd1: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (gnoll) (7 ft. tall); HD 2d8+2 (gnoll) plus 1d8+1 (Drd); hp 20; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (-1 Dex, +3 hide, +2 shield), flat-footed 15, touch 9; Atk +4 melee (1d6+2/crit 18-20, masterwork scimitar), or +0 ranged (1d4, sling); SA spells; SQ nature sense, darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref -1, Will +4; Str 15, Dex 8, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 10.

Skills: Animal Empathy +1, Spellcraft +1, Wilderness Lore +8. *Feats:* Track, Scribe Scroll.

Spells Prepared (3/2; save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, flare;* 1st—*cure light wounds* (×2).

Possessions: Scroll of *cure light wounds* (×5), *endure elements, neutralize poison, shillelagh;* hide armor; large wooden shield; masterwork scimitar; sling with 10 bullets.

Hyena (1): CR —; Medium-size Animal (5 ft. long); HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural), flat-footed 12, touch 12; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); SA trip; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4. *Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA—Trip: On a successful bite, free trip attempt (1d20+1 vs. Str or Dex check), with no touch attack, attack of opportunity, or retaliatory trip attempt.

Note: These elite gnolls have typical ability scores, average hit points, and unexceptional gear. You can re-use these statistics in other adventures, therefore, for default gnoll rangers, barbarians, druids, and sorcerers. If running three distinct, classed gnolls is more work that you're up for, you can have the PCs ambushed by three identical gnoll rangers, instead.

Tactics: The gnolls are hiding in light forest (see *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 60). The ranger is keeping an eye on the road while the other gnolls hide out of sight. This attack is EL 6 (50% tougher than it would be normally) because it is an ambush.

- At 100 feet, the PCs and the lookout have a chance to see each other (they each get to make Spot checks). The ranger is 25 feet from the road, so the PCs might have no chance to Spot him at first. Remember that both the ranger and the PCs receive a -1 penalty for each 10 feet of distance between them.
- To see the ranger, the PCs must make successful Spot checks (DC 30). The gnolls are close enough to the road that a creature with scent, such as a black bear animal companion, can smell them unless the wind is blowing toward the gnolls (20% chance).
- To see the PCs, the ranger must make a Spot check (DC 20). If there are six or more creatures in the PCs party, the DC is 18.
- If the PCs Spot the gnoll ranger at 100 feet, they have two choices. They can begin combat normally, or they can approach stealthily. If the PCs simply charge, everyone rolls initiative. For simplicity, let all the gnolls act on the same initiative count. Only the PCs who succeeded at the Spot check and the gnoll ranger can act on the first round of combat, which is a surprise round. Note that the ranger has 20% concealment in the woods, as do any characters who move into the cover of the trees along the road.

If the PCs approach stealthily, the ranger doesn't automatically spot them at 50 feet (see below); instead he gets to make a Spot check, opposed by the Hide checks of the PCs.

- If the PCs don't ever Spot the gnoll ranger, wait until the distance between the PCs and the lookout is reduced to 50 feet, at which point the ranger sees the PCs automatically. The characters now get the chance to make a second Spot check, opposed by the ranger's Hide check, which is made at +0. If the PCs still don't see the ranger, he waits until the party has just passed the concealed gnolls. Then, as a surprise action, the gnoll ranger lets out a battle cry ("By Yeenoghu's flail!" in Gnoll) and shoots at a lightly armored character in the party. (If possible, he'd like to shoot at a human within 30 feet, as he would then get his favored enemy and Point Blank Shot bonuses.) In response to his cry, the other gnolls attack, but not until the first regular round of combat. The gnolls are hard to see—Spot, DC 20—until they act.

Once combat is underway, the gnolls' tactics are as follows:

Ranger: He uses his bow until forced into combat, at which time he fights with his flail and axe. He prefers to attack humans but is wise enough not to choose his targets recklessly.

Barbarian: She flies into a rage and charges the party, frothing at the mouth and yelling incoherently in Gnoll. Of all the gnolls, she is the least likely to flee. If the PCs failed to spot the gnoll ranger, the barbarian hears the party pass and drinks her *potion of bull's strength* before the battle.

Sorcerer: If the PCs failed to spot the gnoll ranger, the sorcerer casts *mage armor* on himself before combat. Otherwise he does so on the first round of combat. Then he tries to use *color spray* to catch as many enemies as possible; he'll even wade into combat to use his *wand of burning hands* (again, trying to catch as many enemies as possible). If threatened, he can cast *invisibility* on himself (with his scroll) or just flee.

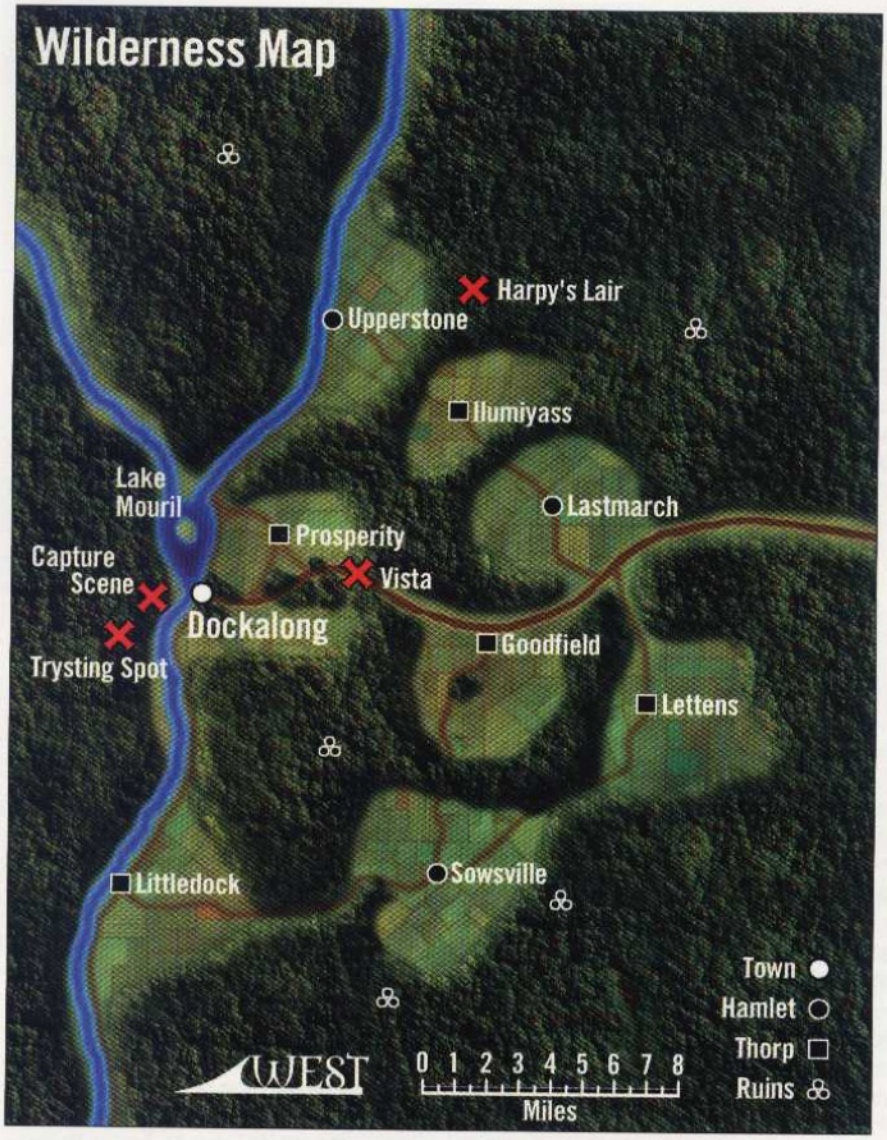
Druid: She sends her hyena in to support the barbarian. She is ready to cure the others' wounds or to fight with her scimitar, whichever is called for.

Treasure: The gnolls' gear is their treasure. The ranger's masterwork mighty composite longbow, the barbarian's *potion of bull's strength,* and the sorcerer's *wand of burning hands* all have a faint, foul odor.

Development: When the PCs have time to look over the bodies of the gnolls, they notice that some of their items (the ranger's bow, barbarian's potion, and sorcerer's wand) have a faint but distinctly potent stench. These are items the gnolls got from the harpy, and her scent lingers on them. There's nothing much the PCs can do with this knowledge, but they might recognize its significance later.

If any of the gnolls escape, they might return. If you feel ambitious, raise each surviving gnoll one level (representing the XP that the gnolls earned on some intermediate adventure). The surviving elite gnolls might gather a band of regular gnolls and return for vengeance. They might also find the harpy and hang out with her for mutual protection.

If any of the gnolls are captured, they reluctantly promise



to reveal what they know and to swear by Yeenoghu to leave this land in exchange for their freedom. (Making deals like this with evil captives might not be in keeping with your campaign's style. The practice of trading information for freedom in this way, however, can be a boon to game play. These deals mean that there's a benefit to capturing enemies alive instead of just killing them and that the players don't have to play out threats or torture to get information from their captives.)

Whether the PCs question live gnolls or cast *speak with dead* on a dead one, they gain access to important information.

- The gnolls are wandering "adventurers" from the wild lands to the north (or maybe they're minions hired by the PCs' arch-enemy).
- The gnolls obtained some of their gear from a harpy several months ago. She gave them the gear in exchange for captive elves. (They don't know what the harpy wants with the captives, but they can guess.)
- The gnolls can take the PCs to the cave "where the harpy lives." It's twenty miles off the road through the woods, but (unknown to the gnolls) the harpy has since abandoned that lair. If the PCs go to the cave, they find it fouled horribly. In the filth are two horribly mutilated elf corpses, so befouled that scavenger animals have shunned them.
- If you want to drop a hint about some plot line in your campaign, the gnolls might have some relevant information (but don't provide clues that draw the PCs off the plot of this adventure).

If prisoner exchanges are common in your campaign, the PCs can take captive gnolls to Dockalong and turn them over to the sheriff for a reward (100 gp per gnoll). The sheriff can then hand the prisoners over to the elven lord, who can exchange them for elven prisoners captured by gnoll warlords.

Dockalong is only a small town, but it's big enough that the PCs will be able to find buyers for the gear they loot from the gnolls (for the usual half price).

Features of the Valley

Once the PCs have dealt with the gnolls, they continue on their way. They'll have to spend at least one night in the wilderness, more if their speed is slow. You can have other encounters occur, such as with a displacer beast or owlbear, but the gnoll ambush is a harsh enough encounter that you probably don't need anything more than that.

If the PCs continue along the road, skip ahead to the next section, "Encounter on the Road." The rest of this section describes the various sites and features of the valley.

Vista

Read the following when the PCs reach this point, as shown on the map:

> Eventually, you come to a pass between two high hills, and from that point on the road slopes downhill. As the road cuts through the forest, it occasionally meets up with trails that lead off into the woods to either side.

This is the point in the road that a traveler heading west can first see Dockalong, although details are still impossible to make out.

Dockalong

See the map of Dockalong and its description.

Lake Mouril

This lake is the reason there's a settlement at this site in the first place.

Harpy's Lair

This is the harpy's lair when the PCs enter the valley, where she is keeping her captive, a halfling man from Dockalong. The

lair itself is a massive, hollow, dead tree. Near the top, some 40 feet off the ground, is a ragged opening that the harpy uses as an entrance and exit. The ground all around the tree is covered by the harpy's droppings.

About 15 feet off the ground is a hole in the tree with a thick branch wedged into it. This is the end of the harpy's roost, a branch that she has lodged into place to perch on when she sleeps. The DC to climb the tree is 15.

This is a dangerous encounter for a reckless 4th-level party, and tough for a prepared 4th-level party.

Creatures (EL 7): The harpy is Arekla, a half-fiendish cleric of chaos and evil. She is always in the tree or nearby during the day and is probably here (70% chance) at night.

Arekla, Old Female Half-fiend Harpy Clr1: CR 7; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid (5 ft. tall); HD 7d8 (harpy) plus 1d8 (Clr); hp 39; Init +5 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 17 (+5 Dex, +2 natural), flat-footed 12, touch 15; Atk +7 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d6, bite); SA captivating song, spell-like abilities, spells, rebuke undead; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; immune to poison; acid, cold, electricity, and fire resistance 20; AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +9; Str 11, Dex 20, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 23.

Skills: Bluff +16, Listen +12, Perform (boast, buffoonery, chant, epic, limericks, melody, ode, parody, sing, storytelling) +16, Spot +12, Wilderness Lore +6, Spellcraft +1, Concentration +1. *Feats:* Dodge, Flyby Attack.

SA—Captivating Song: Creatures within a 300-foot spread become utterly captivated and move toward the harpy. Those within 5 feet of the harpy are defenseless to her attacks. A successful Will save negates (DC 19).

SA—Spell-like Abilities: darkness (3/day), *desecrate* (1/day), *poison* (3/day, DC 20, 1d10 Con initial and secondary damage), *unholy blight* (1/day, 4d8 damage, DC 20).

Possessions: potion of blur (in her lair).

Spells Prepared (3/2+1; save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* (×3); 1st—*cure light wounds, entropic shield, protection from good**.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Chaos (Chaos spells cast at +1 caster level), Evil (Evil spells cast at +1 caster level).

Also in the tree is Nolly, a young halfling man (Com1) whom the harpy has recently captured. The harpy, who is more evil than most villains could ever hope to be, has been torturing him for sport and using her magic to cure his wounds so that he won't die (right away). If the PCs discover him, the best thing to do is to let the players know that he's in such bad shape it's practically indescribable. Let the players know that nobody wants to imagine what the harpy's been doing to him. It's enough to say it's unspeakable.

Nolly contracted filth fever the night the harpy captured him. It incubates for 1d3 days and then kills him in another five or so (unless the harpy's recreational torture kills him first).

The halfling has long brown hair (a feature by which the characters might identify him).

Note that Nolly is captured by the harpy two nights before the wedding. If the PCs enter the valley well before the wedding, he isn't in the tree yet.)

Tactics: The harpy has grown old by being cunning. Generally, she wants to stay out of melee combat.

If she has time to prepare, she casts *protection from good* and *entropic shield* before making an appearance. Then she starts singing. As spell-like abilities don't have verbal components, she can use them while singing. She uses *unholy blight* on those who do not succumb to her call. Finally, she uses her *poison* ability to attack those who are still resisting. She can cast *poison* one round and use Flyby Attack to fly past a PC to deliver the effect the following round.

If sorely injured, she casts *darkness* on a leather strap that crosses her chest, surrounding her with a 40-foot wide globe of darkness. Then she flies off, carrying her sack of treasure. The harpy can cure her own wounds and then either return to fight more or simply abandon her nest. A Spot check (DC 20) allows an archer to aim an arrow into the center of the globe of darkness (where the harpy is), but even then the harpy has total concealment (50% miss chance, rolled separately from the 20% miss chance for *entropic shield).*

If in her lair, the harpy might drink her *potion of blur,* but only if she plans to attack. (If she's going to flee, her *darkness* makes the blur redundant.) There's nothing (other than perhaps her own orneriness) that motivates the harpy to fight to the death.

Any injured character that ventures into the harpy's lair is exposed to filth fever (Fortitude save, DC 12, to resist).

Treasure: Hanging on a peg on the inside of Arekla's lair is a large, leather sack. Inside, and jutting out from it, are miscellaneous portable goods she's scrounged from her more powerful victims. She trades these away to evil creatures in return for information, captives, or more portable goods. Currently, her store consists of the following items:

- *goggles of minute seeing* (badly in need of cleaning)
- *potion of blur*
- masterwork dwarven waraxe
- mighty composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) (needs a new string)
- thick silver necklace with carved jade faces inset on it (700 gp)
- fiery yellow corundum (1,200 gp), small black pearl (200 gp), two onyxes (80 gp, 40 gp), and a piece of polished hematite (16 gp), all wrapped in dirty cloth, clotted with dried blood.

Development: At some point after the wedding is over, barring the PCs' invention, the captive halfling dies and the harpy abandons her lair. She moves to another site and continues to prey on the locals.

Ruins

These are ancient, weatherworn ruins that treasure seekers have long since stripped of valuables. They are a remnant of the same civilization that built the entry arch in Dockalong (area 1), the "bridge to nowhere" (area 4 in Dockalong), and other ancient features.

Each site is different, but in general they include massive stone blocks carved with blasphemous and bizarre reliefs: demons, monsters, and people in strange juxtapositions. In some places, walls still stand and floors are intact. Other sites are jumbles of stones, overturned by the forces of nature and people trying to erase the mark of the previous civilization. Some sites have underground chambers, large or small, and many show evidence of successive inhabitants: beasts, gnolls, and outlaws.

If the PCs set out to explore a ruin, feel free to ad lib a dangerous encounter. (It's what players expect and enjoy.) The PCs might find:

- Survivors of the gnoll ambush, with reinforcements (common gnolls and hyenas).
- An owlbear (EL 4).
- A displacer beast (EL 4).
- A pair of dire weasels (EL 4).
- A pair of dire wolves (EL 5).
- Laggo the outcast satyr, whose pipes they hear, but who slips away before the PCs see him (EL —).

Hamlets (Upperstone, Lastmarch, Sowsville)

A small town like Dockalong is too big to support itself. It needs farmers, fishers, hunters, or other food producers nearby to supply it with some of its food. In Dockalong's case, three hamlets and five thorps are scattered around the valley, and these settlements supply Dockalong with enough food that it can support specialists (such as alchemists, lawyers, clergy, and so on). Humans,, half-elves, halflings, and elves live in these settlements, just as they do in Dockalong, but there are no dwarves and few gnomes in the hamlets and thorps.

All these thorps and hamlets are under Sheriff Savil's jurisdiction. Each has an elder that speaks for the settlement in the rare cases where the people of a hamlet or thorp address issues as a group. These settlements are more like clusters of farmsteads than political entities.

Thorps (Ilumiyass, Prosperity, Goodfield, Lettens, Littledock)

There are five thorps near Dockalong. Ilumiyass is Elven for "Brook Plowed-Land," and Lettens is named for the family that lives there.

Capture Scene

This is where Nolly is captured two nights before the wedding.

Nolly's tracks lead from the path to the northwest about 200 feet. Finding and following the tracks requires the Track feat and a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 11 +1 per 24 hours since the capture). The tracks end inexplicably near the base of a large tree, near some foul-smelling harpy droppings. A branch above the droppings retains a foul odor and shows signs that something heavy was perched on it, although someone would have to climb the tree (DC 15) to notice these clues. A Wisdom check (DC 15) lets a PC recognize the scent as similar to the one lingering on the gnolls' special gear.

Trysting Spot

Here a small stream pours over a natural rock outcropping 8 feet high into a small pool before continuing east to the river. Young lovers from in and around Dockalong sometimes meet here. This is where Bileena planned to meet Nolly the night the harpy captured him.

Encounters on the Road

At this point, the PCs are near Dockalong, and the area is reasonably safe if not completely settled. Sometimes there are woods to the sides of the roads. The people in and around Dockalong hunt, trap, and gather herbs in these woods. Sometimes there are settled plots of land, maturing grain fields, orchards, vegetable gardens, and the like. Small trails branch off from the road to the north and south. The trails lead to various hamlets and thorps (see above), as well as fishing streams, seasonal cabins, and so forth.

Creatures: The PCs might encounter any of the following NPCs while on the road to Dockalong.

Venya (Com2, Hide +4), a frenetic, disheveled middle-aged halfling woman collecting rare berries and herbs for sale to the dwarven alchemist back in Dockalong (Vagne Lutgehr, by name). When she hears the PCs coming down the road, she hides in the woods to one side of the road. She fears that a heavily armed band is likely a bandit gang, and she doesn't want to lose the berries and herbs she's gathered. (She'll probably get 20 gp for what she's gathered so far.)

Markon (Com1), a bold young human man leading a mule with a full pack saddle. He's heading back along the route by which the PCs came to sell his family's pelts, fine woods, and spices in the cities on the other side of the pass. He's brave and maybe even a little foolhardy. When he meets the PCs, he's all bluster and show. He'll go so far as a to draw a short sword and brandish it threateningly if the PCs provoke him. He sees himself as something of a daring adventurer. He might become very curious and (until he catches himself) admiring (if the PCs encourage him).

Jikk Hardwalk (Clr2), an optimistic halfling woman, a cleric of Fharlanghn, and the highest-level cleric in Dockalong.

She's out on her donkey, checking on locals who live far from town. She's curious about the PCs and open with information. With things to do, she's not likely to accompany the PCs back to Dockalong. (She will be officiating at the wedding.)

Search Party

This encounter occurs on the day before the wedding. Once this encounter takes place, the adventure resolves itself quickly. If the PCs arrive early, it doesn't take place until later.

As the PCs continue toward Dockalong, they meet an irate halfling woman looking for her son, who seems to have run off with his girlfriend. To the players, this should seem like a "flavor encounter," but it foreshadows some serious action. The young man hasn't run off; he's been captured by the harpy.

If you care to mislead the players a bit, you can have them determine their marching order (even though it doesn't really matter for this encounter).

> You hear someone yelling up ahead of you. The road curves off to the right, so you can only see about 50 feet ahead. The yelling is in a high-pitched voice speaking in Common, but you can't piece it together just yet.

Give the PCs time to react. Players might want to make Listen checks to identify the race of whoever's speaking or to make out what's being said. Some might want to make Sense Motive checks (DC 5) to see if they can tell whether the person yelling is afraid, angry, or something else entirely.

Creatures: The source of the yelling is Didera (Com1), a middle-aged halfling woman. She's scolding her brother, Corl (Com1). Didera thinks that her son Nolly (Com1) has taken off with his girlfriend, Bileena (Com1), and she's not happy about it. Corl is trying to calm her, and she's yelling at him to stop treating her like a child. Didera has a large switch that she plans to use on her son, and she isn't above using it on her brother.

Tactics: Soon enough, the two halflings are near enough that the PCs can see them. Didera stalks up to the PCs and says:

> "Excuse me, my friends, and may Fharlanghn's blessing be on travelers, but have you seen a lazy, no-good halfling lad with his hair too long and a stupid, lovestruck look on his face? Or perhaps a scheming, disrespectful halfling lass, with a nose too big and a smile that isn't as pretty as everyone says it is? Or maybe the two of them together?"

Didera knows that her son slipped away from home some time last night and hasn't been seen since. She's worried that he's taken off along the road with his girlfriend to go get married in the big city on the far side of the hills. If the PCs can assure her that they've been on the road the whole way and haven't met him, she'll turn back. Otherwise she'll keep heading up the road, accosting passersby and trying to find her son. Once she's tired herself out and calmed down, she'll turn back.

Didera's brother hangs back while Didera talks. He interrupts to keep the conversation calm if Didera's passion gets the better of her tact.

Development: Later in the adventure, it becomes clear that the woman's son did not sneak off with his girlfriend, and the PCs might find evidence that the harpy snatched him. The PCs might deal with Didera and Corl again.

Dockalong Features

This section describes the features indicated on the map of Dockalong (next page).

With just over a thousand adult inhabitants spread out over more than 50 acres, Dockalong is spacious, even sprawling, with plenty of open land for gardens, orchards, pastures, and such. Far from settled, heavily populated lands, Dockalong has plentiful land for those who care to build on it. In fact, the border between the town proper and outlying farms and buildings is mostly a technical matter recognized only on Lord Ulurishay's surveys.

1. Entry Arch. This ancient, freestanding stone archway is used as the symbolic entry point into Dockalong.

2. The Stronghouse. This three-story fort is made of huge blocks of stone on the bottom and brick and wood on the top two floors. The lower floor is ancient, and the upper floors are new. It is of sturdy construction, with no windows on the ground floor and narrow windows (like big arrow slits) on upper floors. To make it more secure, no other buildings are within 20 feet of the fort in any direction.

The stronghouse is Sheriff's Savil's headquarters and the center of temporal authority in Dockalong. It serves as the city hall, courthouse, guardhouse, and jail.

At any given time, at least one member of the town guard (someone in scale armor with a halberd, probably a human) is standing at the door into the fort. The door is a wooden double door, kept open in times of peace. The guard doesn't allow anyone into the fort until someone inside invites them in.

Inside are more members of the guard, prison cells, and a court in which Sheriff Savil receives visitors. The court is on the second-floor.

3. Docks. The lakeshore here is a rocky beach with wooden docks. Inland from the beach are strong, stone walls over 10 feet high, built by the ancients. Dockalong is beyond those walls, level with their tops. Stone stairs and ramps are built into the walls, making it easy to get up to the city or down to the shore and docks.

The docks are busy with boats that go to and from the large cities downstream and with smaller craft of trappers, hunters, and travelers that ply the rivers upstream and down. Halflings are here in great number, many of them boaters.

The Dockwarden is Endlo (male halfling Com7). He oversees dock commerce. He is a busy man with little time to chat or help adventurers. The Dock Captain is Eddner (male human Pal3). He oversees the law at the docks. Given a chance, he'd take the town guard to Thiefmeet on the right night and round up the thieves, but he doesn't have the authority to do so. (Eddner is the paladin that uses his *detect evil* ability to divine whether the PCs are evil.)

4. Bridge to Nowhere. This wide, sturdy, stone bridge is a remnant of some past civilization. It arches high over the river, easily allowing boats to pass underneath. The far end, however, is in elven territory, and so hardly anyone ever crosses the bridge, and there's no road on the other side—just trees.

At the elven end of the bridge is a wooden gate, but it is chiefly symbolic. One can easily get onto the stone railing on either side of the gate and walk along the railing past the gate.

Additionally, the gate would be easy to knock down. Lord Ulurishay and other elven visitors enter Dockalong through this gate and over the bridge.

As the bridge is broad and largely unused, poor travelers sometimes sleep here.

5. Feasting Field. This broad, flat field has orchards on two sides and houses on the others. It's about 40 yards long and a good 20 yards wide. The people of Dockalong and the surrounding land use Feasting Field as a gathering place for celebrations, especially the annual harvest feast. The field is big enough that everyone in Dockalong and the surrounding land could fit in it at once. Feasting Field has the following features:

- A log 4 feet thick and 25 feet long, raised off the ground on trestles. The top of the log is 6 feet off the ground. Hay is piled deep and wide all along the log, especially in the middle. Locals wage contests of strength, balance, and agility on top of the log.
- Narrow terraces with ancient stone retaining walls line the north side of the field. Beyond the terraces is an apple orchard. It's easy to climb up the retaining walls and onto the terraces. Each terrace is about 4 feet high, and there are three levels. Locals use the terraces as a backdrop for archery contests, and the stone retaining walls are chipped and marred from repeated arrow strikes.
- Several heavy trestle tables are scattered about, along with split-log benches. (For parties and feasts, chairs, more benches, and more tables are brought in.)
- A few isolated trees stand about the field, which provide shade and good climbing for children.
- A broad, wooden outhouse sits off in one corner (it seats four).

The wedding reception is held in Feasting Field after the wedding ends.

6. Temple to Fharlanghn. In the middle of an open yard sits a strange building. At the center is a modest, one-room, stone sanctuary with a large wooden idol of Fharlanghn at one end. Added to this stone structure are various wooden rooms, each built to a different plan and apparently at a different time. While the central stone sanctuary has a heavy door with a lock, the other rooms have doors without locks and some even without latches. Jikk Hardwalk, the local cleric, uses these rooms for studying, meeting with people, housing travelers, and storing tools.

The building is surrounded by a flat, bare yard where large ceremonies, such as weddings, take place. A low, stone fence encircles the yard.

Atop the stone sanctuary is a small stone bell tower rising 20 feet off the ground. One can ring the bell by pulling on a rope that hangs down into the sanctuary.

7. Little Town. Most of the halflings of Dockalong, about two hundred of them, live here. The streets are broad enough to permit human-size wagons, but most of the buildings are built to halfling scale.

8. Lord's Tree. A large oak tree stands alone in a large, fenced field. One can just see that there's a large structure in the branches of the tree. This is Lord Ulurishay's treehouse, where he stays on the rare occasions that he visits. When he's away, the only inhabitants are the reclusive two elven servants that keep it ready for their lord's next visit.

9. Thiefmeet. On an island in the middle of the lake, on the far side of the island from Dockalong, is "Thiefmeet," a rendezvous point for thieves working with the nearest thieves' guild (located in a large city downstream). Usually no one is here, but on some nights the thieves meet here to buy and sell illegal goods, services, and information.

When the thieves are meeting, several boats are beached here, and about a dozen thieves and wannabes are present. Most of the time one can find obvious signs that people meet here (such as footprints, dead campfires, and so on), but nothing incriminating. The local highest ranking guild member is Heggan Rightarm (female halfling Rog2), who is usually found near the docks.

Sheriff Savil knows about Thiefmeet and tolerates it. She reasons that it's better to know who to go to if she needs to contact people in the black market than to drive the thieves completely underground (and maybe get assassinated for her trouble). The thieves, in turn, police their own and try not to make the sheriff regret her policy of tolerance.

Entering the Town

In this scene, the PCs arrive in Dockalong and are questioned by the sheriff's bodyguard, a hobgoblin.

It's possible that the PCs are moving so slowly (say, at the walking speed of an armored dwarf), that they actually can't reach Dockalong before nightfall. In this case they can easily find a suitable clearing or even an isolated farmhouse to bed down for the night.

Read this when the PCs travel west of the vista:

You continue to follow the road downhill. When you reach a sudden turn in the road, you see that the track now descends a steep slope. From the top of the slope, you can see a partially wooded valley a dozen miles across. In the middle of the valley, perhaps five miles ahead, is a blue lake with an island in the middle, and on the near shore of the lake is a small, unwalled town. Between you and the town, the land is mostly settled. On the far side of the lake, however, the thick trees show no sign of habitation or industry.

The PCs are looking at Dockalong. The far side of the lake is the elven land proper, where the elves forbid farming, hunting, or even passage. If the PCs look carefully, they can discern a river flowing out of the lake to the left (south) and one or more rivers feeding in to the lake from the right (north). Experienced travelers can estimate that the small town probably holds about a thousand people.

Presuming the PCs head into town, read or paraphrase the following when the approach close enough to make out details:

You follow the road down toward the town. Smaller roads connect to it, leading from fields, orchards, and farmhouses. The road gets wider and smoother. On either side are stone and wood fences. The crops are growing but not yet ripe. Commoners, mostly humans, watch as you go by. Curious children dog your steps from a safe distance. Chickens and pigs wander across the road from time to time.

The PCs might or might not want to speak to the locals. Wing it if they do. Most of the adults have at least heard of the upcoming wedding, even if they're not directly related or involved.

Buildings and intersecting roads become more common as you approach the town. At last, you come to a place where the road widens into a flat, open area about 10 yards across. At the far end stands a large, old, stone archway almost 20 feet across and 30 feet high by itself. Sitting on a stool and leaning back against the arch is a human woman in scale armor. A halberd is propped against the archway near her.

Creatures: This woman, Lanvess (War1), is a member of the town guard watching the "gate." The town has no walls, but the townspeople use this archway (left over from an older, ruined city) as a symbolic entrance.

Tactics: When the guard sees the PCs, she hurriedly gets up, grabs her halberd, and addresses them.

"In the name of Lord Ulurishay, I bid you halt."

She asks who they are and explains that armed travelers are not allowed into the town without Sheriff Savil's permission. Several locals have gathered to see the newcomers, and the guard tells some of the kids to go fetch "Honesty." The guard then waits for Honesty to show up.

The guard is willing to chat with the PCs if they ask her questions. (It's best if you can withhold the information that Honesty is a hobgoblin, as that's likely to come as a surprise to the players.) She doesn't hold anything against them or think that they're up to no good, but it's her job to keep them from

Dockalong

♕ **Dockalong (small town):** Conventional; AL CG; 800-gp limit; Assets 50,000 gp; Population 1,000+ (approximately 45% human, 21% half-elf, 18% halfling, 8% elf, 5% gnome, 2% dwarf, 1% half-orc).

Authority Figures: Savil (sheriff), female half-elf Exp8; Ulurishay (lord), male elf Ari1.

Important Characters: Endlo (dockwarden), male halfling Com7; Willon Evesimere (sheriff's informal investigator), male elf Brd5; Sister Shev (recluse), female human Mnk5; "Slink" (outlaw), male elf Rog5; Werra (Captain of the Guard), female human War4; Honesty (sheriff's bodyguard), male hobgoblin Ftr3; Hork (outlaw), male half-orc Bbn3; Eddner (dock captain), male human Pal3; Jikk Hardwalk (town priest), female halfling Clr2 of Fharlanghn; Mistwalker (healer), half-elven Drd2; Heggan Rightarm (highest ranking Thieves' Guild member), female halfling Rog2; Aulyss (wanderer), female elven Rgr2; Arten (dock investigator), male human Wiz1; Vedda ("wise man"), half-elven man Adp1; Labanu (troublemaker), female gnome Sor1.

Others: Town guards, War2 (×2), War1 (×10); Exp4 (×2); Exp 2 (×4); Exp1 (×30); Com3 (×2); Com1 (×1,000); Brd2 (×2); Brd1 (×4); Mnk2 (×2); Mnk1 (×4); Rog2 (×2); Rog1 (×4); War1 (×50); Bbn1 (×2); Ftr1 (×2); Pal1 (×2); Clr1 (Pelor); Clr1 (Corellon Larethian); Drd1 (×2); Rgr1 (×2).

Note: The town's motto is "Good work for those who work good."

Note: Lord Ulurishay doesn't actually live in Dockalong.

Note: There has never been a census in the town, and no one knows for sure exactly how many people live there, nor exactly how many people of each race there are. The numbers are especially tricky, as many folks work up and down the river, living in Dockalong only some of the time. Any adult dwarf, however, can tell you that exactly twenty-four adult dwarves live in Dockalong (and can name the other twenty-three, plus most of their kids).

entering the city until Sheriff Savil gives them leave. If the PCs challenge the guard's authority, she says that she's acting under the authority of the elven ruler of this land, Lord Ulurishay, and that an affront to her is an affront to him. If the PCs become threatening or violent, she might fight them, but she's not above "executing a tactical withdrawal."

While the guard and the PCs wait for "Honesty" to show up, more locals come to see the adventurers, including some halflings and perhaps a few gnomes or dwarves. Within five minutes, Honesty shows up.

Honesty Arrives

Honesty's goal is to test the PCs. Even if one of them is related to locals, it's his job not to trust the adventurers. Without besmirching their honor, he attempts to provoke them, so that if any of them are reckless, violent, hard-headed thugs, he'll find that out right now. (No one in Dockalong can cast *detect thoughts,* so the authorities have to judge the personalities of suspicious visitors the hard way.)

Some of the locals who have come to see you part, and between them rides a male hobgoblin on a riding horse. The hobgoblin has red-orange skin and reddish-brown hair. He's wearing a breastplate, and the cross-and-circle symbol of St. Cuthbert hangs over his chest. He rides up to you, reins his horse to a stop, and says, "I am Honesty, bodyguard to Sheriff Savil, servant of Lord Ulurishay. Who are you that you bear arms to my town?"

If the characters aren't mounted, he dismounts to confront them eye to eye.

Honesty's primary tactic is to insist that, as a condition of passing through the archway, the visitors must hand over their most powerful weapons. (He's likely to consider a spell component pouch a sorcerer's or wizard's most powerful weapon.) For instance, he might put it like this:

Honesty: You, what is your name?
PC: [answers him]
Honesty: So [insert name, intentionally mispronounced], what is your most powerful weapon?
PC: [answers him]
Honesty: [holding out a hand] Give it to me.

He is stern and demanding because he doesn't want to make it easy on the adventurers (and he enjoys the opportunity to be stern and demanding). Ideally, the PCs recognize him as a legitimate authority figure and comply. If the players need to know what their characters would make of Honesty's demand, you can tell them that it's unusual but not beyond the bounds of law and practice. If they ask how surprised their PCs should be to see a hobgoblin in a position of authority, let them know that the situation is indeed unusual.

Honesty also asks questions of each PC, and more questions of those who seem potentially threatening, such as half-orcs, shady characters, or characters with severed heads hanging from their belts. This is a chance for each player to get to confront this ambiguous NPC in character.

Honesty can make exceptions for PCs who have extraordinary reasons for keeping their weapons, but simple stubbornness is not sufficient. (For instance, Honesty might let a cleric of Kord keep his greatsword if the cleric considers it something of a holy symbol.)

If one or more PCs refuse to comply and Honesty refuses to allow them an exception, then those PCs are not allowed through the archway or into the territory designated as the town proper. They can still find makeshift lodging in an open field or a local's home (maybe someone who doesn't like Honesty and takes the PCs in as a way to tweak him).

If the confrontation turns violent, the PCs are in trouble. Honesty is acting in the name of Lord Ulurishay, and violence against him is punishable by death. The PCs are strong enough to convince Sheriff Savil not to pursue them if they back off, but any attempt to force the issue leads to escalating conflict. Sheriff Savil might be cunning enough to find a sneaky way to imprison the offending PCs, but it could turn into a bloody fight that would mark the PCs as marauders rather than merely adventurers. If it is serious enough, Lord Ulurishay might bring in an elven strike team to capture or kill the PCs.

Most likely, however, the PCs comply to Honesty's satisfaction. At this point, Sheriff Savil shows up.

Honesty, Male Hobgoblin Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 3d10+6; hp 19; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 Dex, +5 breastplate, +2 natural), flat-footed 17, touch 13; Atk +6 melee (1d8+1, masterwork mace), or +7 ranged (1d8+1/crit ×3, masterwork mighty composite longbow) or +8 ranged (1d8+2/crit ×3, masterwork mighty composite

longbow with *+1 arrow*); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Diplomacy +1, Innuendo +6, Move Silently +3, Knowledge (local) +2, Ride +5, Sense Motive +6. *Feats:* Dodge, Skill Focus (Innuendo), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (mace).

Languages: Common, Elven, Goblin.

Possessions: Five *+1 arrows, +1 cloak of resistance, potion of cure light wounds, everburning torch,* breastplate, large steel shield, masterwork heavy mace, masterwork mighty composite longbow [+1], light horse, riding saddle, saddlebags.

As a hobgoblin, Honesty is seriously out of place. Elves are hobgoblins' traditional enemies, and he serves as the bodyguard to a half-elf, in elf-controlled land. One can only understand Honesty by taking into account his fierce devotion to honor and truth. His obvious devotion to St. Cuthbert makes others pause before judging him as an enemy, and his scrupulously fair behavior demonstrates his strong character to those who observe him. He knows that if he ever loses his reputation for fairness and honor, others will lose their trust in him and he'll no longer be welcome among elves and humans. That's fine with him, as he has no care ever to do anything that would ruin his reputation. (He's extremely lawful neutral.)

Honesty cares nothing for Lord Ulurishay and doesn't think much of the common people of Dockalong, whom he regards as weak. But he is completely devoted to Sheriff Savil, and he executes his duty so perfectly that it seems as though he does care for his lord and his neighbors. Honesty doesn't mind a fight. In fact, he rather enjoys one. He's just too fair ever to start one, other than in the pursuit of his duties.

Sheriff Savil Arrives

The next person to ride up is a middle-aged half-elven woman in long, light green robes with a large, black cloak. On her chest is a large, round, wooden pendant with a stylized arrow and tree symbol carved into it. She's not armed.

This is Sheriff Savil. She's come to officially allow the PCs to enter. If the PCs are on foot, she dismounts to face them on their level. She greets the visitors and then speaks some words with Honesty. Ostensibly, she's asking the hobgoblin for a report, and Honesty says that they're honorable visitors. The two, however, use a few key words and phrases to communicate secretly (using Innuendo). It's a simple message whose context is clear to the PCs, so any PC with Innuendo might try a check (DC 10) to see what Honesty's hidden message it. Basically, he's getting across to Sheriff Savil how rowdy or dangerous he thinks the group is and whether some of them are troublemakers.

PCs who try to get a sense of what Sheriff Savil is like can make Sense Motive checks (DC 20). Success means that the PC gets the strong sense that Savil is a canny, deliberate, experienced sheriff.

With Honesty's report, Sheriff Savil welcomes the adventurers to Dockalong. Once they have passed through the archway, Honesty politely and respectfully returns to them their "most powerful weapons."

At this point, Sheriff Savil is positively inclined toward the adventurers. While a group of unknown adventurers can be scary, a group of adventurers that can be trusted is a boon. Adventurers have plenty of gold to spend on lodging and entertainment, and they're interesting. She can help them find lodging; there are two inns near the docks.

Sheriff Savil, Middle-aged Female Half-elf Exp7/Rog1: CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid (elf); HD 8d6; hp 32; Init -3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 7 (-3 Dex), flat-footed 7, touch 7; Atk +5 melee (1d4-1, masterwork dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ half-elven traits, low-light vision; AL CG; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 8, Dex 5, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +8, Bluff +12, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +11, Innuendo +10, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Listen +3, Profession (sheriff) +11,Ride +4, Search +3, Sense Motive +14, Spot +3. *Feats:* Iron Will, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Sense Motive).

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnoll.

Possessions: +1 cloak of resistance, periapt of proof against poison, potion of cure light wounds, potion of neutralize poison, masterwork dagger, light horse, riding saddle, saddlebags.

Sheriff Savil is tough, practical, and canny. Her overriding goal is to protect the people of Dockalong, and she puts that cause above her duty to Lord Ulurishay. (She's chaotic good, and she doesn't think much of duty, per se.) At the beginning of the adventure, the PCs are major unknowns and possibly threatening elements, so she is cautious with them. She's seventy years old.

Sheriff Savil wears the light green robes that indicate her status as sheriff and a wooden pendant that bears Lord Ulurishay's symbol. She also wears her black *+1 cloak of resistance.* Her periapt and dagger are not readily visible.

A Paladin Detects Evil

Dockalong has three paladins. The most experienced one (Eddner, human male Pal3) is the dock captain. While the PCs travel through Dockalong, perhaps looking for lodging, he puts himself near their path so he can use his *detect evil* ability while they go by. A PC who makes a Spot check (DC 20) notices a man standing to one side with a look of concentration on his face. If the PCs notice him, he has no qualms about explaining what he was doing. The PCs might feel that he's being unfair or intrusive, but he sees himself as simply "protecting the good people of Dockalong."

If any of the characters are evil, the paladin reports to Sheriff Savil that he sensed evil among them. Sheriff Savil then becomes watchful and careful around them. (She doesn't want evil characters around, but evil people can follow the law, so she won't kick them out just for being evil.)

Encounters in Dockalong

The following encounters can happen just about any time in Dockalong. Use only those that interest you, and invent others if you like. Unless the players react really well to these encounters, it would take too long to run all of them, so just run those that work best for you. None of these encounters needs to happen before the "Bad News" and "Wedding and Feast" events.

Family Reunion

If any PCs have relatives in Dockalong, they naturally want to meet and perhaps stay with them.

As NPCs, a PC's family members are sort of under your control. As part of a PC's background, however, they're sort

of under the player's control. Let the player determine who the relatives are and what they're like, and then portray them in line with the player's design. (You can, of course, make suggestions that fit your campaign.)

A key question to put to the player is how the PC's relatives feel about the PC taking up the life of an adventurer. Obviously, it's a very risky career, and plenty of parents, for example, worry when their children grow up and set out to be mercenaries, explorers, treasure hunters, and heroes. At the very least, the career tends to take the adventurer far from home. If the relatives worry that the PC is going to be killed on one exploit or another, meeting the PC alive and well is a happy occasion.

Adventuring is also glamorous. If the PC is doing well (and most PCs of around 4th level are doing very well by common standards), he or she is likely a source of pride.

By adventuring, the PC could also be following a family tradition. Of course, some family traditions are good ("picking up the sword in the grand tradition of your forebears") and others are bad ("wandering around, chasing dreams of wealth, and getting into trouble just like your mother").

The family probably also wants to meet (or see again) the PC's adventuring companions. (Typical adventurers and typical families, however, don't always mix too well.)

Family is a source of joy and exasperation. With a little work, you can get a lot of roleplaying mileage out of a PC reuniting with family.

The Mean Cousin: It's possible that the PC has an older cousin or sibling who used to pick on the PC when they were younger. Now that the PC has made it big, this reunion could be an opportunity for the PC to balance the scales of justice.

The Family Heirloom: This reunion is an opportunity for the PC's mother, uncle, grandmother, or whoever to pass along a family heirloom. Perhaps the PC has finally proven worthy of the heirloom. Perhaps the relative who owned it has died, and now it's being passed along.

Make the heirloom some piece of jewelry with monetary but not practical value. PCs generally sell off the jewelry they find on their adventures. This would be a piece of jewelry that means something to the PC and has marketable value, but that the PC doesn't just sell off. The heirloom also serves as a reminder of this adventure—a sort of souvenir.

The Friendly Bard

Willon Evesimere (male elf Brd5) observes the PCs to find out more about them. Sheriff Savil relies on him to gather information about strangers. He arranges to hang out near the PCs, as though he just happens to be there. He watches them for a while and eventually strikes up a conversation with them. If pressed, he lies about how chummy he is with Sheriff Savil.

Willon might provoke the PCs in some way, such as by subtly insulting them. He's not malicious; he just wants to observe the characters in their "native" state of mind.

Willon Evesimere, Male Elven Brd5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (elf); HD 5d6; hp 23; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, *+1 bracers of armor*), flat-footed 11, touch 12; Atk +3 melee (1d6/crit 18-20, *+1 rapier*); SA bard spells; SQ elven traits; AL CG; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 6, Cha 16.

Skills: Diplomacy +11, Listen +0, Perform (epics, odes, hymns, lyre, lyrics, melody, puns, shalm) +13*, Search +2, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +8, Spot +2. *Feats:* Spell Focus (Enchantment), Still Spell.

*Includes +2 circumstance bonus from masterwork lyre.

Languages: Common, Elven.

Possessions: +1 rapier, +1 bracers of armor, scroll of *break enchantment,* masterwork lute.

Spells Known (4/4/2; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, read magic;* 1st—*charm person, identify, mage armor, summon monster I;* 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, hold person, suggestion.*

Willon Evesimere lives in Dockalong and serves as Sheriff Savil's eyes and ears (and sometimes mouth). While he has the interests of the people of Dockalong at heart, he also wants to witness great deeds, learn ancient mysteries, and understand hidden knowledge. His last name is Elven for "Far-Longing."

Curious Sneak

A mischievous dwarven girl sneaks into a PC's inn room in the middle of the night. This encounter tests whether the PCs are civilized or dangerous.

Dorna Lutgehr, a daring and rebellious dwarven girl (chaotic neutral) has heard about the adventurers visiting Dockalong. Bored with her life, she would like to speak with the PCs. She daydreams about becoming an adventurer herself some day. Her mother, Vagne Lutgehr (alchemist, Com1), and father, Horden Lutgehr (lawyer, Com1), have forbidden her from even trying to see the adventurers, let alone speak to them. But Dorna's not known for doing what she's told.

Dorna sets out to sneak into a PC's room and look at his or her stuff. If there's a dwarf in the party, she probably tries to get into the dwarf's room. She's tricky and resourceful, so she can probably get a spare key to the room or find some other way to get in. Her Move Silently bonus, however, is only +0. If the PCs discover her, she tries to get away, but she's slower than an adult dwarf (speed 15 feet).

Chances are, the PCs are going to catch Dorna. The question is, what do they do with her?

If the PCs hurt her, she screams, bringing people nearby to investigate. If the PCs can cure her wounds, they can probably justify their actions. If they kill her, however, they horrify the locals. The PCs are treated as though they're monsters (which they are). Killing a child unintentionally (such as from an arrow shot into the dark) can cause the killer's alignment to shift toward evil. Sheriff Savil investigates the killing, and even if she rules in favor of the PCs, she probably asks them to leave Dockalong.

If they don't land in trouble, the PCs still have to decide how to handle a gutsy, aggressive child. Dorna says she'll be in real trouble if her parents find out what she's done. She claims they'll send her to the mines for a year as punishment, but really they've threatened to send her off to live with an aunt "under the mountain." ("Under the mountain" is an idiom meaning "in a dwarven kingdom.") There she'll be away from non-dwarven influences, and (her parents hope) she'll settle down.

Dorna Lutgehr, Dwarven Girl: CR —; Small Humanoid (dwarf); HD 1/2d4+1; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 15 ft.; AC 11 (+1 size); Atk -2 melee (1d2-3 subdual, kick); SQ limited dwarven traits; AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 4, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10.

SQ—Limited Dwarven Traits: +2 Will save vs. spells and spell-like abilities, +2 Fortitude saves vs. poison, darkvision 60

ft., stonecunning. As a juvenile, she doesn't have the full complement of dwarven traits.

Possessions: Kid's outfit (shirt, shorts, shoes).

"Save My Wife"

A local man whose wife has contracted mindfire asks the PCs to cure her.

Freno (male human, Com1) hears about the PCs. His wife (Abella, female half-elf, Com1) has contracted mindfire (probably from a contagious boater), and he knows that some experienced adventurers can cure disease. Ignorant of the PCs' abilities, he seeks them out to ask them to cure his wife.

Freno is nervous about approaching the PCs but desperate enough to do so anyway. Most likely, he starts by lurking nearby, watching them. Slowly, he builds up his courage and approaches them. He probably approaches the friendliest PC first, such as anyone with a visible holy symbol of a good god. Hoping not to offend those who might save his wife, he is timid and even roundabout, but eventually he asks if the PCs can cure his wife of mindfire.

If a PC does cure his wife, word spreads, and locals start treating the PCs better, regarding them as heroes rather than as drifting outsiders. More locals might approach them and ask for more magical favors:

- "Can you find my grandmother's ring? My daughter-in-law lost in somewhere on our farm."
- "Can you cure my son's blindness?"
- "Can you bring my husband back to life?"

If the PCs can't cure Freno's wife, he's crestfallen, but he doesn't hold it against them. If Freno thinks that they can cure his wife but just don't care to, he might be able to spread resentment among the locals.

Under the Mountain
Local dwarves come to the PCs seeking news from the dwarven lands.

Twenty-four adult dwarves and their families live in Dockalong. Here, they are far removed from their kin. If any of the PCs are dwarves, a small contingent of local dwarves might come to call. Their leader is Harkken Groldig (middle-aged male dwarf, Exp2), the informal leader of the small dwarven community. Harkken and his companions want to know whether the PC dwarf has news from "under the mountain," (an idiom that means "in the dwarven kingdom"). Whether dwarven current events involve wars, arts, politics, or gossip, these dwarves want to hear it. The exploits of famous or infamous dwarves (if there are any in your campaign) are also of interest to the isolated dwarves of Dockalong. In fact, if the PC has really interesting news, the local dwarves hang on every word. While they are far from the center of dwarven power, they still regard the dwarven kingdom (whichever it happens to be in your campaign) as their true home.

You could take this opportunity to define who is the most famous dwarf in your campaign, perhaps a mighty adventurer or a powerful merchant. The local dwarves likely follow that dwarf's career the way people in the real world like to hear about the lives of celebrities.

If the player of the dwarven PC doesn't know any such news, you can feed the player news that you think the PC would know. (This is a good opportunity for you to add details to your campaign or to lay hints for futures adventures.) The PC can make a "retroactive" Gather Information check to see how much news she actually has, or you can just supply the news you want the PC to have.

It's possible that a well-informed nondwarf, such as bard, might actually know more than a PC dwarf. In this case, the local dwarves are not happy to have their news come from a nondwarf, but they'll take what they can get. (They no doubt look askance at any dwarf who doesn't keep up with dwarven affairs as well as a nondwarf does.) If comparing what a dwarf PC and a nondwarf PC know about dwarven affairs, grant the dwarf a +2 circumstance bonus on the Gather Information check. A dwarf that actively tries to keep abreast of dwarven events deserves more.

If no dwarves are in the party, Harkken and company might approach a nondwarf who seems knowledgeable, such as a bard. Alternatively, a PC halfling or gnome might get a less enthusiastic visit from local halflings or gnomes who are after news pertinent to them.

Jikk Hardwalk

If the PCs haven't met Jikk Hardwalk yet, she might look them up. As a cleric of Fharlanghn, she's footloose herself and has a special place in her heart for travelers. She might want to meet the PCs just because they're from far away.

If a PC is getting married, Jikk wants to talk to them before the ceremony. She wants to have some idea of who it is that she's going to be bringing together in holy matrimony. If the person the PC is marrying is from Dockalong, Jikk probably knows the resident already. She's curious about who the PC is, and, as the cleric who's going to be doing performing the service, she has a "professional duty" to know.

Jikk Hardwalk, Female Halfling Clr2 (Fharlanghn): CR 2; Small Humanoid (halfling); HD 2d8+2; hp

11; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +2 leather armor), flat-footed 13, touch 14; Atk +0 melee (1d4-2, shortstaff), or +6 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, masterwork light crossbow); SQ halfling traits, good fortune, spells; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +0, Concentration +5, Hide +7, Jump +2, Spellcraft +5, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Wilderness Lore +7. *Feats:* Dodge.

Languages: Common, Elven, Halfling.

Possessions: Wand of cure light wounds (30 charges), scroll of *dispel magic,* scroll of *neutralize poison, potion of invisibility,* shortstaff, masterwork light crossbow, leather armor, holy water (×4), donkey, riding saddle, saddlebags.

Spells Prepared (4/3+1; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*create water, detect magic, guidance, light;* 1st—*comprehend languages, endure elements, magic stone, expeditious retreat*.*

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Luck (reroll one roll once/day), Travel (freedom of movement effect for 1 round/day/level).

Jikk Hardwalk feels an obligation to the people of Dockalong because she's the most experienced cleric in the community, but she would be at least as happy wandering across the land seeing what she could see. She uses her position as an excuse to be constantly riding her donkey around the valley visiting people and just keeping on the move. While Honesty and Willon are directly connected to Sheriff Savil, Jikk is independent.

Search Party

If the PCs arrived in Dockalong well before the wedding, you skipped the Search Party encounter (above). Arrange for some version of the encounter to take place the day before the wedding.

Other Encounters

The PCs might have other encounters with locals, especially if they explore the town or otherwise draw attention to themselves. Ad lib as needed.

Bad News

On the day of the wedding, news comes that Nolly has not run off with Bileena. This news suggests that Nolly has met with ill fortune. This turn of events is an opportunity for the PCs to cooperate with Sheriff Savil and prove their heroism (if they have any). Ideally, the PCs investigate Nolly's disappearance and find evidence that a harpy took him off, but they can't find the harpy yet.

Bileena Shows Up

On the morning of the wedding, Bileena (female halfling, Com1), the girlfriend of the missing halfling man, shows up. She has not seen Nolly since the day before the PCs arrived (two days ago). She had arranged to meet Nolly at an illicit trysting spot in the elven woods on the night before the PCs arrived, and he never showed up. She thought that he hadn't been able to slip away from his mother and never stopped to think that he might be in danger. Now, Bileena fears that Nolly was arrested, or perhaps even killed, by an elven patrol.

The PCs might learn this news in any of several ways:

- Bileena, Didera (Nolly's mother), Corl (Didera's brother), and other concerned citizens might march to the stronghouse to speak with Sheriff Savil. They could make enough commotion to attract the PCs' attention.
- If the PCs have made a reputation for themselves as helpful people, someone might come to them for help. Sheriff Savil might even send a messenger inviting them to the stronghouse.
- If the PCs have made a reputation for themselves as dangerous troublemakers, Bileena (with Didera and Corl following behind) might confront them, suspecting that they might have played a role in Nolly's disappearance.

If it's a problem for the trysting spot to be in the elven woods, it could just as easily be in another secluded place. The plot works as long as the spot is secluded enough for the harpy to capture Nolly without witnesses.

Sheriff Savil's Contribution

Sheriff Savil is almost sure to hear Bileena's news. Bileena intends to tell her, and other locals who hear about her news also want to bring the news to Sheriff Savil. Most likely, the PCs head to the stronghouse, where Sheriff Savil gets the news from Bileena.

Sheriff Savil wants to investigate Nolly's disappearance. Unless the PCs intervene somehow, she sends guards into the elven woods to trace Nolly's steps. She has a standard, with Lord Ulurishay's tree-and-arrow device on it, that the guards can take with them as a sort of "pass." That way, any elven patrol that happens upon them won't attack them (provided the elves see the standard).

If the PCs demonstrate a willingness to investigate, she probably allows them to do so. She doesn't authorize a reward or pay for the PCs, however, as she's not yet sure what sort of danger Nolly might be in. If there's a PC who wouldn't go along unless there was hope of reward, Sheriff Savil says that there might well be a reward for whoever finds and returns Nolly, but she's not ready to offer a reward until she knows more.

If the PCs investigate, Sheriff Savil sends a town guard with them: Lanvess (female human, War1), the guard they met at the archway. Bileena also volunteers to show the PCs the way to the trysting spot. (If the PCs don't investigate, she leads a group of town guards.)

Following Nolly's Trail

Bileena leads the search party across the Bridge to Nowhere, around the ineffectual gate, and into the elven woods. She leads them along a path that is sometimes clear (where feet have worn it) and in other places where the trail fades and a Search or Wilderness Lore check (DC 10) is required.

The trail is three miles long. At the end of this trail is the trysting spot and the capture site (both shown on the Wilderness Map). If the PCs don't investigate, the town guards follow Nolly's path but don't notice that his tracks head off the trail to the capture site. They return knowing nothing more than they did before. "An elven patrol wouldn't leave much for tracks anyway," they say, suspecting that Nolly has indeed been arrested by the elves.

Looking for Nolly

If the PCs don't find evidence of foul play, Sheriff Savil is content to wait until Lord Ulurishay or a messenger of his comes with news of Nolly's arrest.

If the PCs find evidence that something more sinister than an elven patrol got hold of Nolly, Sheriff Savil organizes a search. Town guards have little to go on, but they can spread out and see what they can find. Sheriff Savil dispatches them

in pairs to investigate the various ruin sites around the valley, following the common wisdom that bandits and dangerous creatures like to hole up in such places.

The PCs are welcome to join in the investigation and provide any advice to the guards that might be worthwhile. If the PCs set out to look for Nolly, however, they'll miss the wedding. (They'll get back in time to join in the feast and encounter Laggo.)

At this point, however, neither the PCs nor Sheriff Savil have enough information to lead them to the harpy's lair.

If you want to foreshadow the upcoming encounter with Laggo, some townsfolk suggest that the satyr has made off with Nolly. The townsfolk, however, think of Laggo as something of a dirty secret, and they're not eager to speak at length about him with outsiders. If you foreshadow the encounter with Laggo in this way, don't give away too much information.

Wedding and Feast

Despite the sad news of Nolly's disappearance, the wedding goes on. After the wedding, the townsfolk hold a party in the Feasting Field. This party is an opportunity for the PCs to test themselves against the locals, show off, and have some fun. At the end of the feast, Laggo shows up. He is the key to finding Nolly, although no one knows it yet.

The Wedding Ceremony

Jikk Hardwalk performs a simple ceremony outside the temple of Fharlanghn. The cleric gives a short homily (about traveling through life together), Willon Evesimere sings a love ballad, the bride and groom exchange rings, and the ceremony ends with the ringing of the temple bell. You can elaborate on the ceremony or gloss it over. While the ceremony itself probably means a lot to many of the characters present, it doesn't mean much to the players. About a hundred people show up for the ceremony, and everyone stands throughout it.

Jikk does the ceremony because she's the "town priest." That is, she's the most experienced cleric, and in addition to her normal duties to her deity, she also performs the role of clergy for the community in general. The role of town priest is honorary rather than official.

After the ceremony, the wedding party and those who have come to witness the wedding head off to the Feasting Field.

If a PC is getting married, they might prefer someone else to perform the service (such as a party member cleric). Bumping out Jikk Hardwalk probably requires some negotiating, but if the players show initiative with and interest in the ceremony, let them take the lead and set things up their way. They could even define the ceremony itself.

The Wedding Feast

The feast is the PCs' opportunity to hobnob with the townsfolk. Depending on how they have handled themselves, the PCs might be regarded as celebrities or dangerous outsiders. While on one level, the games are contests of skill, it's also a chance for the players to roleplay their PCs. Do they brag? Cheat? Grandstand? It's not whether you win or lose . . .

About a hundred people mill about the field. The bride's family puts food and drink on the tables for the celebrants. The happy couple makes rounds greeting well-wishers.

If any PCs are related to the bride or groom, the PC's relatives want to socialize with him or her and with his or her fellow adventurers. If the other PCs are anything like members of a typical adventuring party, there's good fun to have when they meet their friend's family. If the PC's family is anything like a typical family, there's even more good fun to be had.

If there are encounters with locals that you want to bring in, such as those suggested above in Encounters in Dockalong, they could happen now. The feast is also a good time to follow up on previous encounters, such as meeting Dorna Lutgehr's parents, Horden and Vagne Lutgehr.

The PCs might be curiosities for the local children, who beg for the chance to swing their swords, play with their wands, wear their magic boots, or whatever. Playing nice with children is a sure way to win the hearts of townsfolk. Letting them cut their own fingers off with your magic greatsword, on the other hand, is sure to lose you points.

Soon, people start organizing games. The most interesting game to play out is log fighting, but, depending on what the PCs are interested in, they could also play any of several other games. Continue to run games and casual interaction until the players are itching for something more substantial. At that point, Laggo arrives (see below).

Log Fighting: A frequent spectacle is log fighting, in which contestants climb onto the dueling log with quarterstaffs wrapped in cloth. No armor is allowed. They fight until someone falls. See the "Log-Fighting Contestants" sidebar. Conduct the fight normally, with the following special rules:

- Neither contestant starts flat-footed, as the fight doesn't start until both are ready.
- Small contestants use Medium-size staffs, which deal 1d4 points of damage instead of 1d6. (These staffs are commonly called "shortstaffs," but locals jokingly call them "octling staffs" because they're half as big as quarterstaffs.) A shortstaff has no cost, has a critical threat range of 20, deals double damage on a critical hit, weighs 2 pounds, and deals bludgeoning damage. Like a quarterstaff, it's a double weapon, the two ends the same.
- All damage is subdual. (Since you probably don't want losers to be knocked unconscious for hours, treat this as light damage that people can shrug off in minutes.) To allow for the possibility that someone could accidentally get seriously hurt, treat the extra damage done by a critical hit as real damage.
- A character who takes damage must make a Balance check (DC 5 or the amount of damage dealt, whichever is greater). The locals get a +2 circumstance bonus on these checks because they're experienced at the contest. A failure means the character falls off the log and loses.
- A character who takes subdual damage in excess of hit points is knocked silly and falls off the log, losing.

NPCs in the PC Party

If the PC party lacks certain character functions, one of the town NPCs could work with the group when they set off to battle the harpy. If the party has no healer, Jikk Hardwalk or Willon Evesimere could accompany the PCs when they confront the creature to provide what healing they can. Willon could provide a countersong for the battle with the harpy, and Honesty could provide some muscle. It's best if the PCs can take on the harpy themselves, but an NPC can compensate for a gap in the party's abilities in a pinch.

You can also use one of thee characters for a player to run if the player doesn't have a PC ready to use.

LOG-FIGHTING CONTESTANTS

The locals listed below might take part in the log fighting contest. Try to have a PC in every fight. Watching NPCs fight is not much fun for players. (Fights between PCs, however, are usually fun.) The townsfolk are very eager to see the adventurers get beaten or beat local favorites.

A contestant who wins can remain on the log to fight the next challenger, or they can step down.

The twins are two young women who aren't strong or skilled, so they ask to be allowed to take on an opponent two-on-one, each approaching from a different end of the log.

If a PC proves to be especially tough, more than one skilled opponent might ask to challenge the PC two-on-one. The crowd might also yell for the PC to take on challengers with one hand literally tied behind the back. (A Medium-size character can use a halflings' smaller staff in one hand. A Small character would have to use an even smaller staff, dealing 1d3 points of damage.)

Contestant	Init	hp	AC	Attack	Damage	Balance*	Abilities
Farm hand (male human)	+0	5	10	+3	1d6+4	+2	Str 16, Dex 10
Rogue (male halfling)	+7	11	14	+2	1d4	+10	Str 10, Dex 17
Twins (female half-elves)	+0	2	10	+0	1d6	+2	Str 10, Dex 10
Honesty (male hobgoblin)	+0	19	14**	+4	1d6+1	+5	Str 13, Dex 17
Willon (male elf)	+2	23	13†	+2	1d6-1	+4	Str 8, Dex 14
Savil (female half-elf)	-3	32	7	+4	1d6-1	-1	Str 8, Dex 5
Jikk (female halfling)	+3	11	14	+0	1d4-2	+5	Str 6, Dex 17

* This bonus includes a +2 circumstance bonus that locals get for being experienced with fighting in this style on the log.
** Includes +1 from the Dodge feat. Since he's ready, he can start out already dodging his opponent.
† AC 12 if someone shames him into taking off his *+1 bracers of armor*.

• A character can also win by tripping the opponent or by bull rushing the opponent 10 or more feet.

Pig Wrestling: It's nearly impossible to pin a greased pig, but it's fun to try (and to watch people try). For this game, the audience forms a ring and one contestant at a time tries to pin a greased pig (using standard grapple rules). The pig (Medium-size, 1 HD, Str 12, Dex 10) doesn't have an attack, so starting the grapple doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity. The pig's grapple check is +1, and its Escape Artist check is normally +0, but when it's freshly greased, it gets a +20 circumstance bonus on its Escape Artist check. When the pig wrestles, it always simply tries to get away. Each time it makes an Escape Artist check, its bonus drops by two, as some of the grease gets dirty or wipes off. If anyone catches the pig, the pig's owner greases it up again.

The locals can run pig wrestling simply as a spectacle, with contestants able to try over and over to pin the pig until they succeed or the audience jeers them into giving up and letting the next person try. Multiple contestants can try at once to catch the pig, helping each other (with the aid other action or simply by wrestling the pig together). The locals can also run it as a contest, with each contestant given 10 rounds to try to pin the pig. (Someone in the crowd has a 1-minute hourglass.)

Archery: The locals can set up archery targets against the stone walls on the north side of the field. Run contests as opposed attacks rolls, with the attack roll indicating how close to the center of the bull's-eye an arrow strikes. The standard distance is twenty paces (about 60 feet), which means that contestants stand at one side of the field and shoot across it at the targets on the far side.

Archers might improvise flashier spectacles, such as shooting an apple that's tossed into the air (AC 20).

Performance: Any PC with a musical instrument likely gets asked to play it. Doing so prompts an informal contest, with Willon (male elf, Brd5, Perform +11, +13 with his lyre) as the most serious competition.

Magic Show: Arten (human man, Wiz1), the dock investigator and the town's only wizard, might show up and put on a short show of some kind. He can use *dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, and *silent image* to impress the crowd. A PC spellcaster can probably outdo him.

Fisticuffs: Run a fisticuffs contest as a straight unarmed (and unarmored) fight. Any of the log fighters might be willing to try their hands at fisticuffs, and the sidebar that gives their combat statistics for log fighting gives you all the information you need to run an unarmed fight. (Base unarmed damage is 1d3 subdual damage for Medium-size contestants and 1d2 for Small pugilists.)

Wrestling: A perhaps less brutal alternative to fisticuffs, wrestling uses the standard grappling rules. Blows are not allowed, so starting the grapple doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity, and attacking an opponent with a light weapon (even an unarmed strike) is not allowed.

Riding: If a PC, such as a paladin, wants a chance to demonstrate riding skill, the townsfolk could arrange a riding test. The contestants jump obstacles and navigate twisting courses. Opposed Ride checks tell you who does the best job (although various circumstance bonuses might also apply).

LAGGO ARRIVES

When your players get tired of having their PCs socialize and play games, Laggo arrives. His appearance is an ambiguous event for the PCs, who might be friendly or hostile toward him. If the PCs befriend Laggo, they have a pretty good chance of getting him to tell them where the harpy is. If they don't, they might never even know that he has any link to the harpy.

Laggo wishes that he could get back in the good graces of the townsfolk. He has a gift (a masterwork dagger) that the harpy gave him, and he hopes to give it to someone in town as a genuine but misguided attempt to buy acceptance. Unfortunately, he's also angry at the townspeople for rejecting him, and he's not any good at controlling his emotions.

Today he has sneaked through the outlying villages around Dockalong, and he's heard the sounds of celebration at the Feasting Field. (At your option, he might arrive with someone that he's already *charmed* in tow, such as a good-looking young woman.) He approaches through the orchard north of the field and plays his music near the edge of the field. The pipes' magic reaches 60 feet, all the way across the field. As the revelers are likely clumped somewhere in a group, he can affect almost all of them. About a third of them resist the satyr's pipes, but another two-thirds are overcome by the *charm person* effect and suddenly regard Laggo as a trusted friend and companion.

At this point there's a confrontation. Most of the revelers want to invite "their good friend" Laggo to the party. A few recognize that Laggo is *charming* people, and they want to drive him away. In fact, with the PCs around, those who want to drive Laggo away are especially bold. Laggo might be tough enough to hold his own against a few commoners, but the adventurers would give the townsfolk an overwhelming advantage in a fight.

Laggo looks much like a typical satyr, except for the hint of a sulk that always lurks around the corners of his mouth. His skin is reddish tan and his hair a deep chestnut brown. Laggo wears leather shorts and has a sack slung over one shoulder.

Laggo the Outcast, Male Satyr Sor1: CR 5; Medium-size Fey (4 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 5d6+5 plus 1d4+1; hp 28; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural), flat-footed 14, touch 12; Atk +1 melee (1d6-1, gore) and -4 melee (1d4-1, dagger); SA pipes, sorcerer spells; AL CN; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 12 Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff +11, Concentration +3, Hide +14, Listen +17, Move Silently +14, Perform (dance, pan pipes, lullabies, bawdy songs) +11, Spellcraft +4, Spot +17. *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Spell Focus (Enchantment).

SA—Pipes: Laggo can effectively cast *charm person, fear,* or *sleep* on all creatures within a 60-foot spread as a 10th-level sorcerer (Will save, DC 15). A creature that successfully saves against any of the pipe's sonic effects cannot be affected by the same set of pipes again for 1 day. A satyr can only have one set of pipes "active" at a time. Only satyrs can play the pipes and activate these supernatural abilities.

Possessions: Pan pipes, leather shorts, sack (slung over shoulder), earring, bracelet, masterwork dagger.

Spells Known (5/4; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights, daze*, ghost sound, light;* 1st—*charm person*, color spray**.

*The save DC for these Enchantment spells is two higher than normal spells for the level.

Laggo vs. the Townsfolk

Where this confrontation goes is up to you and the PCs. One thing to avoid, however, is turning this into a discussion (even a heated discussion) between NPCs. The players don't want to watch you portraying different sides in an argument. Get the characters involved. Here are some things that could happen in the confrontation:

- Laggo's smart enough to realize that he's crashing a wedding feast, and he's smooth enough to pretend that he knew all along about the wedding, and he's here to present the lucky couple with a gift (a masterwork dagger from the harpy). The dagger carries the awful scent of the harpy. The PCs might be able to recognize the smell as similar to that on the gnolls' gear or at the spot where Nolly was captured. (The newlyweds either accept or reject Laggo's gift, depending on whether they're *charmed*.)
- A townsperson who's hasn't been *charmed* comes up to a PC who also hasn't been *charmed* and says, "We need your help, please, to drive this evil fey creature from our town. We don't dare face him most of the time, but with your help we can drive him off."

• If desperate or frustrated, Laggo might cast *charm person* (DC 16) or even *color spray* (DC 14) on someone who's vocally opposing him.

• A bold crew of unenchanted townsfolk grab the staffs for log fighting and strip the cloth from them. They hand them out to anyone who'll help "teach this guy a lesson." If they get even a little encouragement from others, they might threaten Laggo or even attack him.

• A local can explain who the satyr is to the PCs. If the local is *charmed*, the explanation is something like:

"Oh, him? That's darling little Laggo. I knew him when he was just a little baby, so ugly he was cute. He was raised in the town, and by rights he's one of us. For some reason, though, people just don't like him. They won't let him come back."

If the local is not *charmed*, the explanation is more like:

"That's Laggo, a curse on our town for nine years now. We opened our hearts to him. He was a helpless babe when we found him, and we raised him as one of our own, but he turned on us. Look at him, using his fey magic to control the minds of these good people. We keep trying to drive him off, but he just won't leave."

• A townsperson, trying to stir the mob against Laggo, yells, "He's the one that killed Nolly! It was Laggo."

• Laggo sees the PCs as people who aren't biased against him. He spins a good yarn about how he's been unfairly treated by the townsfolk (Bluff +11, with a +2 circumstance bonus as it's mostly true), and he just wants to be accepted.

• If threatened verbally, Laggo defies those who oppose him, possibly letting fly with some curses. If physically threatened, he flees, possibly casting *color spray* first.

• A PC might suggest that someone fetch Laggo's adoptive father, Garto Fenista, to deal with Laggo. Even if someone can find Garto, he doesn't want to come confront Laggo. He has not had any luck controlling Laggo in the past, and it's painful to see his adopted son being treated as an outcast.

The PCs Deal with Laggo

To find out about the harpy, the PCs have to ask Laggo about the dagger or whether he knows about dangerous creatures in the area. A hard line, such as threats or judgments, turn him off. If the PCs push Laggo, he's got enough bitterness to tell himself that he doesn't care if some random townsperson dies at the harpy's claws. He'll just run away or lie if pressed. The following approaches work more or less well in getting Laggo's help (good Diplomacy checks are also helpful):

• Persuading him that the townsfolk will be grateful if Laggo helps them, and that his help could help get him back in their favor, can win him over.

• Appealing to compassion for Nolly (although a judgmental approach—"If he dies, his blood is on your hands"—backfires).

• Saying that the PCs simply want to learn more and aren't out to get anybody is a big help. If they've figured out that a harpy is involved, they're more likely to get Laggo's support if they want to "talk to the harpy about what she might know" rather than to kill her.

Laggo doesn't want to reveal that he's friends with a harpy because he's (rightly) sure that townsfolk will hold it against him. Also, he wants to believe that his friend isn't really dangerous. ("She's not like other harpies.") He doesn't want to believe that she might have captured Nolly.

How Laggo Responds

Depending on how the PCs approach Laggo, they can get any of several results. The interaction between Laggo and the PCs is free-form. It's up to the PCs' actions and your judgment to determine how much they turn Laggo to their side. One temptation with free-form scenes is for the DM to make sure that everything turns out right. Resist this temptation. The PCs should be able to fail at a free-form challenge as surely as they have a chance to fail in combat. If the PCs aren't able to win Laggo over, it probably means that Nolly dies because of it and that others might suffer a similar fate at Arekla's hands. Don't make the PCs' opportunity to succeed with Laggo into a meaningless exercise by denying them the opportunity to fail. Here are Laggo's reactions, from the worst result to the best:

• Laggo lies convincingly (Bluff +11) that he knows nothing. He found the dagger in one of the ruin sites that he likes to hang out in. "Sure, I'd be happy to take you there." If the PCs want to see where he got the dagger, he leads the PCs on a wild goose chase to empty ruins, then ditches them. Using Sense Motive to determine that Laggo is hiding something is difficult. He's a fey creature, not a "person" in the usual sense, so the PCs suffer a -2 penalty on Sense Motive checks to see past his Bluff. See "Failing to Find the Harpy," below.

• Laggo lies that he doesn't know anything about the knife, but he soon takes off to the harpy's lair to confront her about Nolly. See "Failing to Find the Harpy," below.

• Laggo admits that he knows a harpy but insists that she wouldn't kill anyone. He volunteers to ask her if she knows anything about Nolly but won't let the PCs come along because he doesn't trust them. See "Failing to Find the Harpy," below.

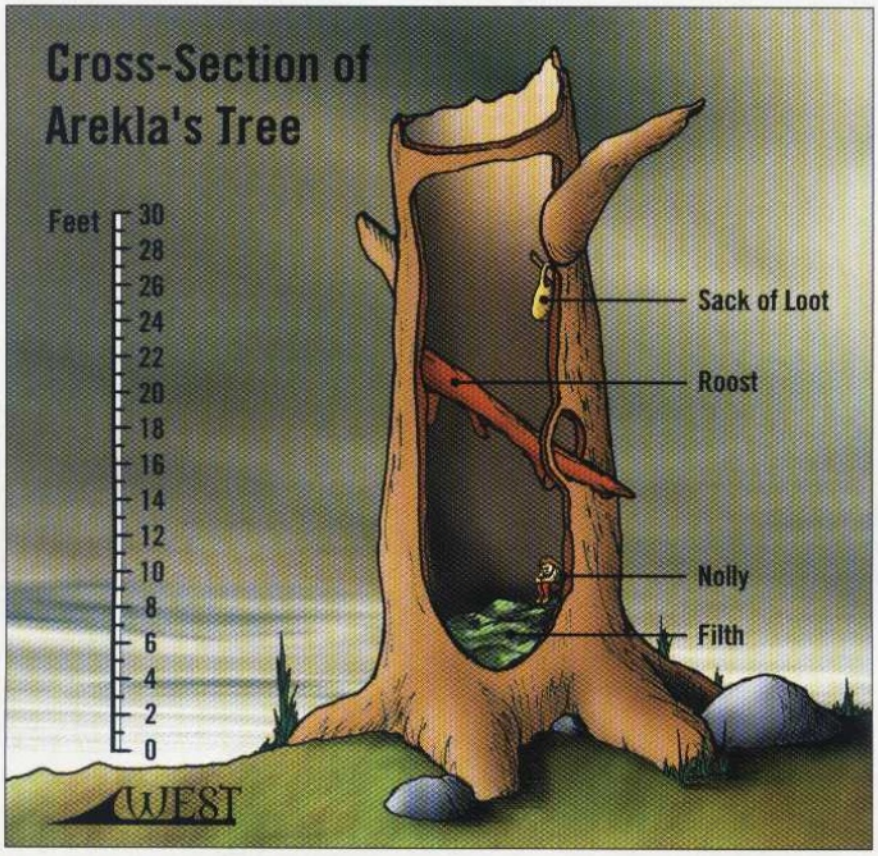
• Laggo admits that he knows a harpy and agrees to let the PCs come along to talk to her (or to watch him talk to her), provided they swear not to hurt her. (He'll allow them an escape clause, such as ". . . unless she attacks us first"). Unless the PCs have some hard evidence that the harpy's captured Nolly, this is about the best the PCs can do.

• Laggo realizes he's been a fool to trust the harpy, and he understands that she's a horrible creature that must be destroyed. He takes the PCs to her lair but then flees rather than watch his friend get attacked. He hopes that his helping the PCs will make up for his foolishness.

• Laggo realizes he's been a fool. He not only brings the PCs to the harpy, but he volunteers to help by enticing her into an ambush. Although he knows that Arekla's a harpy, Laggo doesn't realize that she's an evil half-fiend cleric. (He's only nine years old. He doesn't have a lot of experience.)

Ending the Wedding Feast

The confrontation with Laggo, no matter how it turns out, disrupts the wedding feast enough that the feast is effectively over. The friends of the newlyweds usher them away to somewhere more peaceful. If violence breaks out, most of the revelers scatter. If not, people drift away (after helping themselves to last plates of food and mugs of drink). Most likely, the PCs have something important to do, and they leave the feast quickly, transitioning between their social and adventuring roles.



Failing to Find the Harpy

It's possible that the wedding feast ends without the PCs gaining a way to find the harpy. With luck, the PCs might be able to find Nolly before he dies anyway.

If the PCs have failed to raise doubts in Laggo's mind about the harpy, he sets off into the wild and there's no apparent way for the PCs to find the harpy.

If the PCs have at least raised serious doubts in Laggo's mind, he goes to the harpy and asks whether she knows anything about Nolly. The harpy might convince him she's innocent, or she might kill him and mutilate his corpse for having the temerity to question and betray her that way. The conversation ends up one of the following ways (roll d%):

01-25: The harpy kills Laggo in a fit of pique.

26-50: The harpy lies convincingly to Laggo.

51-75: The harpy berates Laggo and Laggo heads away from Dockalong to sulk.

76-100: The harpy berates Laggo, Laggo comes to believe that the harpy has captured Nolly, and he returns to Dockalong to lead the PCs to her.

If the PCs have no way to find the harpy, they can search aimlessly for her, but they're almost certain to fail. In this case, Nolly soon dies at the harpy's hands, and the harpy heads out to find a replacement. Possible results are:

- The harpy lures a dwarf or human into a secluded spot in the wilderness (too big for her to carry) and kills him on the spot. The corpse is easy to find, and it provides more clues that the perpetrator of these crimes is a harpy. This could happen nightly or almost nightly.
- The harpy snatches another halfling and takes the victim back to her lair for recreational torture. This could happen over and over (but only once ever several days, as each victim keeps the harpy entertained some amount of time).
- The harpy cleric abandons her lair for another nearby. Someone finds the old lair with Nolly's corpse in it.
- A few people spot the harpy, so the PCs (and the town guards) can narrow their search, but not before Nolly, and possibly another NPC, is killed.
- Laggo returns, causing more trouble, but giving the PCs another chance to get information out of him, or to get him to question the harpy.

Confronting the Harpy

Eventually, somehow, the PCs are going to find the harpy. Unless they have some exceptional scheme to lure her into a trap, they probably confront her at her lair. The encounter could work any number of ways.

Loaded for Harpy: If the PCs know they're going up against a harpy, they should be prepared to protect themselves from her song. Characters can deafen themselves (wax in the ears is typical), which gives them a -4 penalty on Initiative and a 20% failure chance when casting spells with verbal components. (They also fail Listen checks, obviously.) A *silence* spell is another good trick to protect against the harpy's song. Additionally, Jikk Hardwalk and Willon Evesimere can cure any wounds the PCs have before they head out to fight the harpy.

Leading the Guards: The PCs might ask Sheriff Savil to send some guards with them. If the PCs have a really good lead, Sheriff Savil might send up to ten volunteers from among the town guards (War1, hp 4 each). The guards, however, succumb easily to the harpy's song (Will +0). If their ears are plugged (or they're otherwise protected), they're an inviting target for *unholy blight*. The guards might draw attacks otherwise meant for the PCs, but the deaths of several guards is likely to dampen the excitement of the townsfolk about the harpy being killed or driven off.

Laggo's Fresh Corpse: If the PCs get to the harpy soon after she has killed Laggo, then she has used two of her three daily uses of the *poison* spell-like ability. She's also in a foul mood (after killing her only friend), which might make her distracted or reckless.

Laggo as Bait: If the PCs arrange to watch secretly while Laggo talks to the harpy, roll randomly for how the discussion between the two of them turns out (see "Failing to Find the Harpy," above). If the harpy attacks him, she'll first try her song and then use *poison* if the song fails. (Laggo's Will save modifier is +9. The harpy's song has a DC of 19.)

Laggo as Help: Laggo might be persuaded to help the PCs kill his only friend. He's not much when it comes to combat, but the *sleep* effect from his pipes could be very useful, especially if the PCs have their ears plugged (see above). Even if the PCs take such precautions, *sleep* or *fear* are passable desperation moves if it looks as though the PCs are

otherwise going to be massacred. If Laggo does nothing else, he might draw attacks otherwise meant for PCs. The most useful things Laggo could do would be to lure the harpy on the ground and cut loose with his *sleep* effect. If he can get lucky and put the harpy to *sleep,* she's easy to kill. (This option is so good you might want to arrange for it not to work. For instance, if the harpy won't come down from her perch on the tree, then being put to *sleep* means that she falls, takes damage, and wakes up angry.)

Gnoll Allies: If you want to make the harpy battle tougher, give her gnoll allies—either elites (using the statistics from the "Ambush" encounter) or regular gnolls. The soft way to include these allies is to have the PCs come across the gnolls while they're waiting for Arekla to return to her nest (probably to trade a captive they've caught for more treasure). That way the PCs fight the gnolls and harpy sequentially as opposed to simultaneously.

Driving Off the Harpy: Old harpies are cunning harpies. If she needs to, Arekla flies away and abandons the valley. Routing the harpy instead of killing her counts as a victory for the PCs. If she comes back, it will be as a 2nd-level cleric looking for vengeance, possibly with reinforcements. Reaching 9th level gives her the *contagion* spell-like ability and another feat, among other benefits.

Epilogue

Once the PCs have killed or driven off the harpy, they can return to Dockalong to receive the accolades of Sheriff Savil and the rest of Dockalong.

Reception

The PCs were cause for suspicion when they first arrived. Now they're hailed as heroes. You can have NPCs whom they've met thank them and congratulate them. Maybe Dorna Lutgehr's parents will even let her see the adventurers now that the PCs have proven themselves to be good people. It doesn't matter all that much to the residents of Dockalong if the harpy was defeated or not. The fact that the characters were willing to put their lives on the line for one of the town's own sons forever insures that the PCs will be treated with the highest respect the townsfolk can bestow.

Rewards

Sheriff Savil might give the PCs a reward for their help:

- If the PCs defeat the harpy and Sheriff Savil has reckoned that they're heroes (not merely mercenaries or thugs), she thanks them and gives them a magic item: a *slaying arrow* (dragons). It was Dockalong's share of the loot when an elven patrol and a contingent of Dockalong guards cornered and killed a bandit gang several years ago. Sheriff Savil has no real use for it, as dragons aren't threats in this area, and she's afraid to sell it because it could wind up in evil hands and be used to slay a good dragon. If she thinks the PCs deserve a reward and that they will use the powerful item wisely, she gives it to them. She asks them to promise not to sell it, as she wants to be sure it's used only in the fight against an evil dragon.
- If the PCs defeat the harpy but don't live up to Sheriff Savil's high expectations, she draws from her official coffers and raises money from prominent citizens to grant them a reward of 400 gp.
- If the PCs try to defeat the harpy but fail, Sheriff Savil might draw from her official coffers to offer them up to 100 gp to recompense them for expenses and to thank them for trying if they've otherwise impressed her with their actions.

What About Laggo?

If Laggo has helped the PCs, doing so gives him his best chance yet to win his place back in Dockalong. If the PCs have shown themselves to be heroes, they are in a good position to speak up for Laggo. Provided all has gone well, the PCs can arrange a happy ending for him.

On the other hand, the PCs might judge that Laggo's desire to live with the people of Dockalong is misguided. It might be that there is no good fit between a wild, fey creature and the settled townsfolk. In this case, the best outcome would be that the townsfolk offer to take Laggo back, but he decides on his own to leave Dockalong. He feels better about leaving if it's his own choice rather than exile.

Laggo might decide he'd like to leave with the PCs. He might make a fine NPC ally for your campaign. (He would, however, make a poor PC or follower. His most powerful special ability—his pipes—would too often affect the other PCs.)

If Laggo doesn't get back in the good graces of the townsfolk, a happy ending is unlikely for him. He might leave, ashamed of having befriended the harpy. He might just keep hanging around causing trouble.

An extreme result could be that Laggo turns evil as a result of his association with the harpy and his anger toward the townspeople of Dockalong. He returns as a dangerous foe (and perhaps a higher-level sorcerer).

Making This Adventure Your Own

A nonlinear adventure such as this one requires that you, as the DM, get into the spirit of the adventure so you can ad lib events smoothly. Modifying this adventure to make it your own can help you better handle it. Also, it's easy to modify Dockalong because, since exploring the cities doesn't involve combat, you don't have to worry about power balance or even complete statistics for NPCs.

Consider the following modifications:

- Pick some NPCs in the town that aren't given statistics, such as the paladin or the monk. Drop them and replace them with NPCs of your own design. Write up the new NPCs the way the sheriff, hobgoblin, bard, and cleric are written up.
- Change the town in some significant way. Make the local lords gnolls instead of elves. Invent a strange religion that's popular in the town. Give it your own angle somehow.
- Change the personalities of the main NPCs or the way they interact with each other (or both).
- Alter the way the government works. It could be corrupt, indifferent, overly concerned with regulations, oppressive, or more enlightened than the text depicts it.
- Determine to what extent Laggo's exile is a case of xenophobia and prejudice on the townsfolk's' part and to what extent it's a fair punishment for Laggo's indiscretions.
- Give the unnamed ancient civilization a unique identity that fits your campaign's history. Maybe they were foul servants of dark forces, enlightened gnolls (who descendents are evil savages), or a mysterious race of creatures unknown in the present.

Further Adventures in Dockalong

Like most small towns, Dockalong doesn't have a lot of adventure opportunities for motivated adventurers to tackle. Still, you have some options for keeping the PCs in and around Dockalong, at least for a while.

- Dockalong could simply be a home base, from which the PCs set out on adventurers in the wilderness. Bandits, gnolls, beasts, and ancient ruins all offer adventure possibilities.
- The Thieves' Guild decides to abrogate their tacit understanding with Sheriff Savil and put the squeeze on her. The rogues want to use Dockalong as one step on a new trade route to the gnolls in the north, dealing in slaves, poisons, or other serious black market goods. Sheriff Savil needs the PCs to break up the thieves' operation.
- The PCs spend some time messing around in Dockalong, getting involved in petty politics, stormy love affairs, town gossip, and other entertaining elements of small town life.

Permission is granted to photocopy this list for personal use only.

Dramatis Personae

Keep this list handy so you can keep track of NPCs and their names during play. The bride and groom are not specified, as their identities depend on which character hook you're using. Write them in under "bride" and "groom."

Abella: Female half-elf stricken with mindfire
Arekla: Female half-fiend harpy
Arten: Dock investigator, male human wizard
Bileena: Nolly's girlfriend, female halfling
Bride: _____ [enter name & race]
Corl: Didera's brother, male halfling
Didera: Nolly's mother, female halfling
Dorna Lutgehr: Curious, trouble-making dwarven girl, daughter of Horden and Vagne
Eddner: Dock Captain, male human paladin
Endlo: Dockwarden, male halfling
Freno: Man with sick wife (Abella), male human
Garto Fenista: Laggo's adoptive father, male human
Groom: _____ [enter name & race]
Harkken Groldig: Informal leader of the local dwarves, male dwarf
Heggan Rightarm: Highest ranking Thieves' Guild member, male halfling rogue
Honesty: Sheriff Savil's bodyguard, male hobgoblin
Horden Lutgehr: Lawyer, father of Dorna, husband of Vagne, male dwarf
Jikk Hardwalk: Town priest, cleric of Fharlanghn, female halfling
Laggo: Male satyr raised as human in Dockalong, Garto's adoptive son
Lanvess: Town guard, female human
Markon: Man traveling to market, male human
Nolly: Captured halfling man, Bileena's boyfriend
Savil: Local sheriff, middle-aged female half-elf
Ulurishay, Lord: Elf noble to whom Sheriff Savil reports
Willon Evesimere: Sheriff Savil's agent, male elf bard
Vagne Lutgehr: Alchemist, mother of Dorna, wife of Horden, female dwarf
Venya: Herb and berry gatherer, middle-aged female halfling

Experience Awards

If you're ever going to give story awards, this adventure calls for them. You can award XP for:

- Challenging noncombat encounters (handling Honesty's test, picking up clues from the scene of Nolly's capture, not mistaking a dwarven girl for a thief and accidentally killing her, getting valuable information from Laggo, and so on).
- Mission goals (rescuing Nolly)
- Roleplaying (interacting with the various locals)

Awarding such XP is up to you because it helps set the tone of your campaign. Some DMs, for example, award XP for dealing with a social situation in character, some for dealing with a social situation successfully, some for both, and some for neither. Here are some guidelines:

Noncombat Encounters: If the PCs dealt successfully with Laggo, give them normal XP for a 5th-level encounter. If they botched it to one degree or another, gives them fewer XP or no XP for this encounter. Since a lot of the action in the adventure isn't related to facing down monsters, give each PC an additional 900 XP for the social scenes (the equivalent of three encounters for a 4th-level party of four heroes). Award more XP if the PCs had lots of social encounters or if they handled themselves with great success. Award less if they had few encounters or if they bungled their way through Dockalong.

Mission Goals: Give them 1/2 XP for defeating the harpy and 1,600 XP for rescuing Nolly. (The idea here is that half the point of fighting the harpy was to kill it or drive it off and the other half was to rescue Nolly.) If they fail to rescue Nolly but rescue the next victim, give them 800 XP for satisfying their mission goals. If two or more NPCs die at the harpy's hands, give them only 400 XP for completing their mission goals. (If the PCs brought NPCs along as backup in the fight with the harpy, and any of the PCs died, grant them fewer XP for mission goals by splitting the experience among the PCs and any NPCs who helped. See the "NPCs In The PC Party" sidebar for more information about using nonplayer characters from town to supplement the PC group's abilities.)

Roleplaying: Hand out about 100 XP to each character for roleplaying, less (or none) if the players didn't show initiative in playing their characters, and more (up to 200 XP) if they roleplayed effectively and well. You can give more roleplaying XP to the characters whose players roleplayed the best, but rewarding some players over others on something as subjective as "roleplaying" can be divisive.

- The PCs meet and impress Lord Ulurishay, who hires them into his service as troubleshooters. Mostly, they provide muscle and magical intelligence in Dockalong, and he sends them on various important missions, as well. As the PCs grow in power and renown, Lord Ulurishay's peers hear of them and hire them for even more important and dangerous missions elsewhere in the elven borderlands. Ω

As the lead designer for the 3rd Edition Dungeons & Dragons game, it was Jonathan's idea for gnolls to have ranger as their favored class. Now he's busy promoting gnoll rangers in the new Dungeons & Dragons Chainmail miniatures game.